
AUGUSTA DENBEIGH.

ALICE B. DAVENPORT.

AUGUSTA DENBEIGH;

A NOVEL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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AUGUSTA DINBICH

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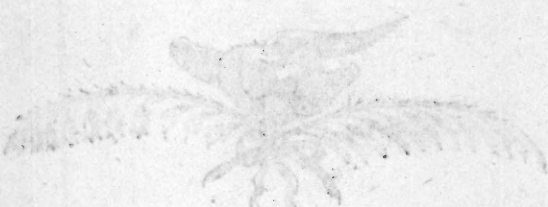
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AUGUSTA DENBEIGH.

CHAP. XXXII.

AS Augusta sat at work one morning, she was told that a lady wished to speak with her ; and before she could once conjecture who it could be, Miss Simpson entered the room. After the first salutations were over, which were extremely cordial on both

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sides,

sides, Miss Simpson said, " Although you quitted the country without bidding me an adieu, yet I no sooner discovered where you lived, than I hastened to pay you a visit."

Augusta made her excuses and acknowledgments to her friend, and then inquired by what means she had learnt where to find her.

" By the merest accident on earth," replied she, " I drove along Bond-street yesterday, at the very time a carriage broke down; and as our progress was obstructed, I had leisure to look about me, and saw you at this window, anxiously intent to discover if the two ladies, whose cries were so loud, had received any material injury; and I marked the house so well, that I had no difficulty in finding it again."

Augusta next inquired after the health of Mr. Simpson and his son; and heard that the former was in town, and very much engaged by

by the business which brought him there; but that Mr. William Simpson remained in the country, where he was no less taken up with the diversion of hunting. Augusta was much pleased to learn from Miss Simpson's conversation, that Lady Merton had ascribed her hasty departure to a necessity, which had compelled even her consent: And she could therefore with the more ease, listen to the information which Miss Simpson was disposed to give her of that family.

“ I do not think,” said Miss Simpson, “ that poor Lady Merton will ever see her family designs completed. My brother says that Miss Merton is the greatest jilt in nature; and it must be allowed he has just cause for thinking so. I dare say you well remember the flirtation which used to pass between them, and the decided preference she gave him before Lord Merton. Would you believe it? When Lord Merton was gone, she behaved to him as haughty, and as insolent, as she at first used to do. I believe he had the courage

to reproach her with her coquetry, which she resented as an unpardonable freedom, and would never speak to him afterwards."

"I rather think," replied Augusta, "that your brother presumed too much upon her civility to him; for I believe her to be sincerely attached to Lord Merton; and I am sure that Lady Merton is now convinced of it."

"If you were not as humble as Miss Merton is vain," cried Miss Simpson, "you would have perceived, as every body else did, who it was that possessed the largest portion of Lord Merton's affections. But to have done with them, and talk of ourselves: I hope we shall be together very often, for the short time I shall remain in London, I have so few acquaintances in town, that I am more alone here than in the country. My father has promised to take me to the play this evening. Pray come to me, and be of our party?"

Augusta

Augusta assented readily to this proposal, and Miss Simpson, after having left her address, took her leave.

The lodgings which Mr. Simpson had taken for himself and his daughter, were at the house of a distant relation of his, a linen-draper, in Tavistock-street: And thither Augusta repaired early in the evening. She found the tea equipage already set out, and Mr. Simpson waiting for her arrival most impatiently, with his watch in his hand. He told her, "That in order to ensure good places, it was necessary for them to be at the playhouse soon after the doors were open; that then they should have their choice."

He hurried her to a seat at the tea table without introducing her to several strangers who were yet standing: This omission however was soon remedied by Miss Simpson, and the names of Mr. Mrs. and Miss Wakeley were announced to Augusta.

Mr. Wakeley was a very little man, of an accommodating aspect ; but not so his wife : Her stately air gave Augusta an idea of her being a person of considerable importance ; and indeed this suspicion was confirmed by the appearance of the daughter, whose dress was most profusely expensive. A silence of some moments ensued, which was at length broke by Miss Wakeley, who exclaimed, " La ! mamma, if we can but get into a side box, how delightful it will be ! "

" Do you suppose, my dear, that I will sit any where else ? " replied Mrs. Wakeley. " I rely upon Mr. Simpson to see that we have proper places. "

" I think, my love, " cried Mr. Wakeley, " that we should have sent one of the shopmen to have bespoke seats. "

" When Betsy and I go by ourselves, " answered Mrs. Wakeley, " we are obliged to do

do so ; but now we have my cousin with us, it is quite another thing."

" The bespeaking of places, in my opinion, is quite *superstitious*," said Mr. Simpson. " Let us but be there in time, and we may have the seats we like best."

This little dialogue discovered to Augusta who the persons that had chiefly maintained it were ; which had however no other effect than exciting her surprise at their being so solicitous where they sat.

Tea having been hurried over, and a coach called to the door, the four ladies, and Mr. Simpson took their seats in it : Mr. Wakeley having assured them, that he should be at the play-house before they were.

According to Mrs. Simpson's wish, they arrived at Drury-Lane theatre, before the door which leads to the boxes was opened ; he therefore ordered the box-keeper to

shew them into a side box. There was no side box disengaged.

Miss Wakeley murmured ; but followed her party into a front box. Mr. Simpson in the mean time had made his way to the front seats, and was beginning to place the ladies, when a ragged fellow, who had kept his place very composedly, told him, that the two first rows were taken. They proceeded to the next boxes, which were all precisely in the same predicament ; and then, Mrs. Wakeley having protested that she could not bear to sit so far behind, it was proposed that they should try the second range of boxes. Here however, no better luck awaited them, and they were obliged to return to the rejected benches in the front box. The movements of Miss Simpson and Augusta had been regulated entirely by the others ; for it was totally indifferent to them where they sat, so that they could hear and see the performers. Miss Wakeley was however extremely unhappy, to have such a dirty wretch, as she termed

termed the man who kept the seats, sitting before them; and she more than once expressed her horror to Augusta, lest he should be succeeded by some vulgar people, for no others, she said, would employ such a creature to keep places.

The performance commenced, but still no company appeared to claim the front seats. At length the first act was concluded, and then a crowd of gentlemen from behind rushed forward, and the ragged keeper of seats withdrew.

“ Heyday,” cried Mr. Simpson, “ what can be the meaning of this. Pray, Sir, addressing himself to the gentleman who had taken a seat before him) was that fellow employed to keep a seat for you ?”

“ No, Sir,” replied the gentleman ; “ and I perceive, by the question, that you are a stranger to this new sort of imposition, which has been only practised upon the public for

some few years past. You must know then that those men are employed by the box-keeper; who, not satisfied with the great presents he receives from those persons of rank, who wish to take the side boxes for themselves and their friends, is determined to extort from those whose situation does not admit of their sending footmen to keep places. If on your entrance you had given this fellow a shilling, he would have accommodated you with any seat you had chosen; so that to see a play to advantage, you must now pay this tax, in addition to the stated price of admission. As the rules of the theatre do not allow of places being kept beyond the first act, you saw that we then seized upon the benches which had been kept empty."

"I wonder," said Mr. Simpson, "that the public submit to such an imposition. I am sure if I had known it before, I would have taken up with any seats, rather than have given the fellow a farthing."

"The

“The folly of imitating their superiors,” answered the gentleman, with a smile, “pervades almost every class of life. I am told it is usual for people of rank to give ten guineas a season to the box-keepers, besides loading them with presents of game. It would therefore be *mean* for those who aim at any thing like gentility, to refuse doing what is practised by their betters. John Bull, (added he) is the only person likely to take up the cause; and I heartily wish the innovation may extend to the galleries, as we might then hope to see the whole redressed.”

The gentleman then politely offered to exchange seats with Augusta.

She expressed herself satisfied with her situation, but said that Miss Wakeley would be glad to get lower down.

The stranger then interceded with the gentleman who sat on the front seat, and to her great satisfaction they made room for her.

Here she had an opportunity of displaying herself, without which her dress, which she thought so pretty, would have been thrown away.

Augusta and Miss Simpson, who were really attentive observers of the representation, were greatly annoyed by the opening and shutting of the box doors; which every one seemed to close after them with as much noise as they could: The former, however, had soon reason to rejoice in the obscurity of her situation, for just before the play concluded, she saw Lord Euston enter one of the stage boxes. He did not stay long; and appeared merely to have come with a design of escorting some ladies home, who left the theatre before the entertainment began. The distance would not admit of her seeing him very distinctly; tho' she thought he seemed grave, and out of health. She was afflicted to observe this; and it added to her desire of not being distinguished by him.

The

The unexpected sight of Lord Euston had thrown her reflections into so different a train, that her mind was totally detached from every surrounding object; and very fortunately her companions were too much taken up with the humour of a new farce, to attend to the extraordinary revolutions her spirits had undergone. Mr. and Miss Simpson wished her to sup with them after the play; but she declined their solicitations, and the same coach which set them down at their lodgings, conveyed her afterwards into Bond-street.

CHAP. XXXIII.

BESIDES the dread of reviving Lord Euston's attachment for her, Augusta had other motives, which induced her to wish that she might remain concealed from him just at present. She could not with propriety receive any visits from him; and she knew that if he found her in such society, and so unprotected, his generous spirit would take the alarm, and that his sollicitudes about her would be productive of much disquietude to them

them both. She therefore resolved to avoid going abroad with Miss Simpson as much as she could, without subjecting herself to the imputation of caprice or unkindness; and she flattered herself that the places they were likely to frequent, would not be visited by Lord Euston. She had scarcely settled the matter thus with herself, before she saw Miss Simpson and Miss Wakeley enter her apartment.

“ Oh, my dear, dear Miss Denbeigh,” cried the latter, for Augusta had entirely won her heart by giving her a front seat at the theatre, “ Mamma has sent me on purpose to ask you to come to dinner. I dare say we shall go some where in the evening. I am dying to go to the opera, and if you and my cousin will but mention it, that will be the place.

“ I am not well enough,” replied Augusta, startled at the name of the opera house, “ to go into public this evening; and as I should probably

probably be a check to the rest of the party, I must be excused the acceptance of Mrs. Wakeley's invitation."

"Nay," said Miss Simpson, "do not refuse us the pleasure of your company to dinner. The party to the opera may take place another time. Indeed you must come to us to-day."

Miss Simpson was so well seconded by Miss Wakeley, that Augusta could not withstand their entreaties; and therefore promised to be with them by four o'clock. To avoid the possibility of being alike compelled to go to the opera or elsewhere, she however resolved to go in an undress; and that this might not give offence to Mrs. Wakeley, she determined to go on foot. Mrs. Davis was her attendant, and indeed her conductor; for she knew not one step of the way to Tavistock-street, and durst not have ventured thither alone.

On

On her arrival she was shewn into the same apartment which she had seen the evening before ; but to her surprise it was now crowded with company. They soon adjourned to dinner in another room, where a plentiful table awaited them, of which Mrs. Wakeley, who seemed highly gratified by this display of opulence, did the honours.

The frequent hints of Miss Wakeley, to form a party for the play, or Collins's brush, were at last attended to by the gentlemen ; but as Augusta and Miss Simpson positively refused to accompany them, the plan was at length dropped, and card tables were introduced. As Augusta also declined partaking of this amusement, one of the gentlemen, who was, as she had been informed, captain of an East Indiaman, and Mr. Simpson's very particular friend, seated himself beside her, and began a conversation, which, as was natural on his part, turned to the various countries he had seen, and the immense oceans he had often traversed.

Augusta,

Augusta, to whom this sort of character was entirely new, and whose taste for knowledge inclined her to lend a willing ear to the communications of Captain Darnley, was highly pleased with his relations, and the avidity with which he answered her questions. She confessed to him that her surprise was unbounded, when she reflected that the produce of the most distant parts of the globe were conveyed across the trackless ocean in a wooden frame, made so manageable by the ingenuity of men, as to ensure a degree of safety, which banished the apprehension of danger. "Certainly," added she, "the navigation of the sea is one of the most important discoveries that has ever been made; and I should suppose that a ship must be a glorious object."

"Is it possible, madam," cried Captain Darnley, "that you have never been on board a ship?"

"Indeed—

"Indeed I know not how it would have been possible for me to have been in one," answered Augusta, with a smile, "since I have never yet been upon the water even in a boat."

"Then," said Captain Darnley, "I hope to have the honour of shewing you mine, which is at present on the Thames." And without waiting her reply, he gave a general invitation to the company, to dine with him on board the Ganges, the following day.

"Oh dear," exclaimed Miss Wakeley, "that will be charming! And shant we have a barge, and go down the Thames?"

"If the day is very fine," said Mrs. Wakeley, "I suppose we may go down the Thames, without appearing particular; but I fancy few people go on the water at this season of the year."

"What

“What signifies what other people do, if we have a mind to the thing,” answered Mr. Simpson. “I don’t see why fashions should *preconcert* us, when we are enough among ourselves, to keep each other in countenance.”

“Miss Denbeigh,” said Captain Darnley, “has never yet been upon the water, and therefore if the weather will admit of it, I think she will be more highly gratified, if we go down the Thames.”

“Indeed,” replied Augusta, “I cannot answer for myself, for I feel a sort of dread of the water, which makes me apprehensive that I shall prove a troublesome companion in a boat.”

“Oh, as for the matter of that,” said Miss Wakeley, “you know one is always afraid on the water; but then there is no danger in the world.”

“If

“ If Miss Denbeigh suspects herself of being a coward,” said Miss Simpson, “ let us go, as well as return, in carriages ; for I am sure where fear is, pleasure must be banished.”

“ I hope,” replied Captain Darnley, “ that Miss Denbeigh will in this instance repose a confidence in me, and I will engage to secure her from any sort of danger.”

“ To express any apprehensions of danger, in a voyage of a few miles, before you,” said Augusta, with a smile, “ must appear ridiculous ; and I am ashamed of having given room for such suspicions. That mode of conveyance which is most agreeable to the party, will certainly prove so to me.”

Captain Darnley then took upon himself to settle every thing, and the company gave themselves up to the anticipation of the pleasure which awaited them on the morrow. Miss Wakeley was particularly enchanted with the idea of it ; so much so indeed, that she
could

could not, as she said, pay any attention to her cards ; and as the stake she played was a high one, she lost no inconsiderable sum. A very elegant supper was served, to which they all sat down ; and as songs were proposed afterwards, they did not separate until a very late hour.

Such an entertainment, at such a place, had greatly exceeded Augusta's expectations, and she condemned herself for having thought severely of Mrs. Wakeley's pretensions, since she could afford to live in so superior a style. Miss Wakeley appeared to her a good humoured girl ; and she pitied her for the affectation which destroyed the natural graces of her little person.

The morning was calm and cloudless, and the party were all assembled in Tavistock-street, by twelve o'clock : From whence they proceeded to the side of the Thames, and embarked in their pleasure boat. The good spirits every body appeared to enjoy, kept up

those of Augusta; who certainly did feel some alarm from the motion of the barge. Captain Darnley watched every turn of her countenance, and whenever he saw her look the least apprehensive, did not fail to remind her that they were in *deep water*, and therefore perfectly safe; which assurance however had a very different effect to what he intended. The busy scene transacted on the Thames, together with the different views it afforded, were highly amusing to her; and the various objects were all pointed out to her by Captain Darnley, as they rowed along. The beautiful domes of Greenwich hospital at length came in sight; and as it was so early in the day, he proposed that they should leave the barge, and shew Augusta the buildings. The nature of the foundation was explained to her, and she beheld with infinite delight so grand a structure, consecrated to the noble purpose of affording an asylum to those brave fellows whose youthful ardour had rendered them the preservers of Britain, and whose

whose decrepid age now claimed the protection it found from a grateful nation.

As they were quitting the hospital, a coach drove to the door, from which three gentlemen alighted, who had much the appearance of being foreigners. They were followed by two others, and in one of the last Augusta instantly recognized Lord Euston. A retreat was impossible, even if she had been collected enough to have attempted it, for he also saw her, and lost not a moment in approaching her. The evident joy, and interest he took in seeing her, were visible to the whole company; and when, in addition to the many inquiries he had made after her health, he asked her whither she was going, Captain Darnley replied for her, and entreated him to join their party, if he was disengaged. Forgetful of the friends he had attended, and indeed of every thing but the pleasure of meeting Augusta, he readily accepted the invitation, and in a few moments the boat put from the shore.

As

As Lord Euston could not with propriety engross the whole of Augusta's conversation, and he was besides too well bred to neglect paying the most respectful attentions to the rest of the party. Every one was charmed with such an acquisition as he promised to be. Miss Wakeley strove to attract his notice, and Mrs. Wakeley seemed to demand it by her air of pre-eminence: As yet however they were strangers to his rank.

"Pray, Lord Euston," said Augusta, during an interval in the conversation, "were not those gentlemen foreigners who came with you to Greenwich?"

"They are Italians," replied he; "and now you remind me of them, I know not what they will think of me for having quitted them in so unceremonious a way. However, (continued he) Sir William Danby must take care of them; and when I relate my inducement, they will forgive my departure."

The title of Lord Euston, which Augusta had now first given him, made a wonderful alteration in the countenances of most of the company, and suspended for some time the mirth to which they had been disposed. His high polished manners were, however blended with so much complaisant good humour, that each individual gradually felt themselves restored to their ease, and now loaded him with such an exuberance of civilities as became excessively troublesome : The more so, as they detached him wholly from Augusta. She, in the mean time, reflected, with much concern, that in a place where she had so little suspected it, she should have encountered Lord Euston. She had observed that he viewed her companions with an eye of scrutiny, and plainly perceived that he waited impatiently for an opportunity of questioning her about her situation. To conceal it from him was totally impracticable ; and all that she could resolve was, to prohibit his visits, and to avoid the possibility of seeing him again. She was roused from this reverie by Captain Darnley, who

who pointed out to her the Ganges, Indian, which lay near Gravesend, and they were soon alongside of her.

As the sight of a ship was no new object to any one but Augusta, they had little curiosity to go about it, and she was therefore soon left, with Captain Darnley and Lord Euston; the former of whom conducted her to each part, and explained the different uses of them.

She saw that Lord Euston followed them with the hope of finding an interval to say something to her; his designs were however soon defeated, for dinner was announced, and Captain Darnley led Augusta into the cabin.

The entertainment was quite superb; and the polite cheerfulness of the Captain soon inspired his guests with an unusual share of hilarity. Miss Wakeley protested she was quite enchanted already with living on board a ship, and asked him if he would take her to India: And Augusta remarked, that when

she grew tired of the habitable world she should chuse to adopt such a partial seclusion from it as this.

The evening was uncommonly mild, and the pale beams of the moon trembled on the surface of the water. Their departure was spoken of with regret by every one ; but carriages were waiting for them on the shore, and it was time to think of returning to London. Mrs. Wakeley however insisted that they should not part when they arrived there, and invited the whole company to a supper at her house.

Lord Euston was distinguished by a most particular invitation, which he accepted, because he could not deny himself the pleasure of being near Augusta, and because it offered him the means of finding out where she lived, which he had yet had no opportunity of inquiring.

They

They all ascended the deck, in order to leave the ship, when a boat rowed along side of it, and a man demanded very impatiently whether Mr. Wakeley was still aboard.

“ Good God,” exclaimed Mrs. Wakeley, “ it is one of the shopmen ! What can have happened ? ”

Mr. Wakeley stood pale and trembling with affright ; Lord Euston looked all amazement ; and the rest of the party betrayed an evident interest in the anticipated disaster.

The man soon reached the deck on which they stood, and without any preparation, told Mr. Wakeley that he had an execution in his house, and that the bailiffs were lying in wait for him. He added, that he had immediately taken a boat, to give him the information in time, to prevent his falling into their hands.

The consternation that ensued is not to be described. Miss Wakeley burst into an agony of tears; Mrs. Wakeley reproached her husband for having been the ruin of her fortune; and the poor man stood dumb with grief and shame, till roused by the violent and bitter invectives of his wife, he told her that her own pride, folly, and dissipation had alone reduced them to this state.

The altercation now kept up with equal warmth on both sides, would probably have continued for some time, had not Augusta, whose feeling bosom was deeply affected by this distressing scene, interrupted it, by asking Mr. Simpson, in the sweet and soothing voice of pity, if nothing could be done to extricate Mr. Wakeley from his embarrassments.

"I don't know whether there can or not," replied Mr. Simpson, "till I hear what he owes. However I think he had best remain here, whilst I go to town and inquire into the affair.

affair. If I can bring about his liberation I will."

"And what is to become of me and my poor girl?" cried Mrs. Wakeley, almost choaked by her tears. "We have now no house—no home—no shelter!"

"Pray, madam," said Augusta, "try to compose yourself. The friendship of Mr. Simpson will, I dare say, soon restore you to your home; and for the present, I beg that you, Miss Wakeley, and Miss Simpson, will go with me to Mrs. Mills's, where I know you can be accommodated comfortably."

The rest of the company seemed now to have caught from Augusta's generous exertions that sort of compassion which leads to usefulness; and they therefore set themselves about thinking what could be done for this unhappy family.

It was at length decided that Mr. Wakeley should remain concealed at Gravesend, and that Mrs. Wakeley, her daughter, and Mr. Simpson should return to Tavistock-street.

By this arrangement Miss Simpson only was to be Augusta's guest; at which Miss Wakeley murmured much, declaring she could not bear to enter a house in which there were such a set of Ruffians: But she was silenced by her mother, who was determined not to go without her.

Augusta, Miss Simpson, Lord Euston, and Captain Darnley proceeded to London in one coach; Mrs. and Miss Wakeley, Mr. Simpson, and two more gentlemen in another.

It was so late an hour when they arrived in town, that Lord Euston and Captain Darnley took their leaves of the ladies as soon as they had seen them safe into Bond-street: And thus the day, which had begun with such flattering

tering prospects of pleasure, eventually terminated in the bitterest anguish to some of the party, and in disappointment and chagrin to the others :—A sad, but true epitome of the vicissitudes of human life !

C H A P. XXXIV.

EARLY the next morning Miss Simpson declared her intention of going to Tavistock-street, both to inquire after Mrs. and Miss Wakeley, and to make herself acquainted with the extent of their misfortune.

Augusta thought herself too much of a stranger to obtrude upon them unsolicited, and therefore contented herself with sending a message which indicated her desire to serve them,

them, as well as her good wishes. She had not parted with her friends above an hour, before Lord Euston sent up his name, and was immediately admitted.

“ It is given me at last,” said he, “ to tell my dear Miss Denbeigh how transcendently happy I was made yesterday, by meeting with her so unexpectedly, after every inquiry I could make to discover where she was had proved totally fruitless.”

“ You were very good,” replied Augusta, “ to take so much trouble ; and you have no doubt learnt, that Lady Merton is gone to Nice, to her son, who has been very ill.”

“ Yes,” said Lord Euston, “ that every one could tell me ; but no body could inform me of what I was much more solicitous to hear.”

The energy with which Lord Euston spoke somewhat disconcerted Augusta, and she remained silent: He therefore added, "I fear you are unwell. Your fatigue yesterday, together with the agitation you suffered for the distress of your friends, was too much for your gentle spirits: But I have the pleasure of telling you, that I have seen them this morning, and that Mr. Wakeley's affairs are likely to be settled, and himself replaced in his business."

"I am sincerely glad to hear it," answered Augusta, "for though I know but little of them, it was impossible not to feel interested at the sad reverse of fortune with which they seemed threatened. I have been twice at their house with Miss Simpson, to whom they are related, and they seemed to abound with every elegance which affluence can boast."

"That," replied Lord Euston, "I find from Mr. Simpson, has been their bane; and he attributes their misfortune to the folly
and

and extravagance of Mrs. Wakeley. But is it possible that you have no farther connexion with those people? for I really imagined, from the authoritative tone and behaviour of Mrs. Wakeley, that she was either a relation, or so intimate a friend, that you were in a great measure under her guidance."

"Your penetration has for once deceived you," answered Augusta, with a smile: "but for Miss Simpson, I should yet have been a stranger to Mrs. Wakeley; and it is probable my acquaintance with her would have continued no longer than whilst she remained a lodger in her house."

Lord Euston appeared buried in thought for some moments, and then seemed struggling for resolution to speak; at length he thus addressed her. "When last I parted from Miss Denbeigh, I promised to banish myself from her presence, until I could conquer that unhappy and unfortunate passion which was so displeasing to her. I cannot say that

that those sentiments are entirely eradicated, for my esteem and admiration of her are interwoven with my existence : But I return with resolution to offend no more, and with an affection so corrected as a friend and brother may profess. It is her friendship therefore that I now aspire to : It is her acceptance of mine which I now alone presume to solicit. If she thinks me unworthy of this, there is but one more sacrifice which I can make, and perpetual banishment shall be my lot."

Augusta was much affected by the solemn manner in which Lord Euston spoke.

" Oh !" cried she, " can you doubt that I shall not value as I ought, such a noble and disinterested friendship as you offer me ? Yes, (extending her hand to him) you shall be the representative of my first and most revered friend ; who, if he can look down from that heaven which he inhabits, will glory in the virtue of his nephew, and rejoice that in his

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own family his poor Augusta has found a sincere adviser."

"Well then," said he, kissing her hand, and forcing himself to speak gaily, "I will convince you how proud I am of my office, by the avidity with which I enter upon it; you must therefore allow me, as your adopted brother, to introduce you to my sister, Lady Mortimer."

"It is an honour which would have gratified me highly," replied Augusta, "whilst I was with Lady Merton, and which I shall solicit you to confer upon me, when I am under her protection again; but in such a retired plan of life, as I have laid down for myself, and in such an obscure situation, I cannot, with propriety, receive a visit from Lady Mortimer."

"The reasons you urge against it, are those of all others," replied Lord Euston, "which convince me of the necessity there is to give you

you such a friend as my sister. The obscurity of your situation, and your intercourse with people so dissimilar to yourself in taste, manners, and education, is too painful to me to observe. The adopted daughter of Mr. Euston has a claim upon his family, to restore her to that circle in which he has so eminently qualified her to shine."

"Alas!" answered Augusta, "the fervour of your friendship misleads your judgment. The bounty of Mr. Euston affords no pretext for further claims upon his family: My brilliant prospects faded when he fell, and my views now should be moderated to the humble sphere to which I am reduced."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Lord Euston, "can I bear to hear this?" But suddenly recollecting himself, he added with a smile, "I had hoped that our newly cemented friendship would have given my opinion more weight with you; and although you may reproach me with tyrannizing over your inclinations,

nations, I shall still have courage to persevere where I know I am right."

"Unskilled as I am in the world," replied Augusta, "I distrust the fallability of my own judgment: All that I can do is to act from feeling and principle, and I find that these are continually opposed by custom. I will therefore no longer contend with you; and by giving up my own opinion, I shall surely convince you that I think more highly of yours."

Lord Euston bowed. "Shall I then attend Lady Mortimer hither this evening?" asked he.

"If you please," answered Augusta.

He expressed himself much delighted with this compliance; and after some little time took his leave.

When

When Miss Simpson returned from Tavistock-street, she ran up to Augusta's apartment; who, that she might not appear insensible to the honour Lady Mortimer was to confer upon her, was dressing to receive her.

"O my dear Miss Denbeigh," exclaimed she, as she entered her room, "what a noble creature is your friend, Lord Euston. I do not wonder now that Lord Merton's partiality met with so little encouragement. It is evident that Lord Euston is your admirer; and it is impossible for you to be insensible to such exalted worth as his."

"Indeed," replied Augusta, "your words are quite unintelligible to me. Lord Euston and Lord Merton are both estimable young men; but I cannot conceive what the former can have done, to intitle him to such encomiums from you, to whom, in fact, he is a stranger."

"I will

" I will briefly tell you," said Miss Simpson. " He was with my father in Tavistock-street this morning as early as seven o'clock. He ordered the servant to conduct him into his room, and having apologized for waking him, added that he came to make a tender of his services to Mr. Wakeley. In short he produced notes to the value of two thousand pounds, which he said he hoped would satisfy his creditors, and that he would wait the repayment until better fortune crowned his industry. My father, astonished at such an act of disinterested generosity, attributes the whole of it to your influence, which is I think very natural."

" Amiable Lord Euston!" cried Augusta, " how much does this benevolence exalt you in my eyes! Ah, Miss Simpson! (continued she) do not rob him of a particle of his merit, by attributing this bounty to any other cause than the goodness of his own heart. I neither knew of, nor solicited it."

" I did

“ I did not mean to infer either,” replied Miss Simpson. “ I only took it for granted that a supposed connexion between you and the Wakeleys, which arose, no doubt, from the compassionate share you took in their distress, had procured them this most fortunate assistance from his lordship.”

“ I am glad to understand from your mode of expression,” said Augusta, “ that his assistance is likely to produce the purposes for which it was alone intended. I therefore hope that every thing is settled, and that the affair has not got abroad to the detriment of Mr. Wakeley in his business.”

“ No,” answered Miss Simpson, “ he is now likely to do well again, if this mortification can, as I flatter myself it will, give a check to the extravagance of Mrs. Wakeley. I shall surprise you,” continued she, “ by telling you that Miss Wakeley is also disposed of in an advantageous way.”

“ I am

"I am much pleased to hear it," said Augusta, "but pray tell me how."

"I believe," replied Miss Simpson, "that her mother's chief concern arose from the injury which she conceived this would do to her establishment; of which, from the education she has given her, she had formed very high expectations; and therefore availing herself of the general compassion which has been excited, she has prevailed upon Captain Darnley to take her out with him to India, where she makes sure of her marrying some rich nabob."

"And is Miss Wakeley willing to adopt such a plan, for the advancement of her fortune?" asked Augusta.

"Oh, yes," said Miss Simpson, "she is half wild at the design, and is already employed in preparing for her departure, which will take place in a few weeks. But, come,
you

you are dressed, and my father is waiting for us in the dining room."

Mr. Simpson was as profuse in his commendations of Lord Euston as his daughter had been.

"But for him," said he, "I do not think I should have been able to temporize with the creditors as I have done. Though I will own I thought his offers so extraordinary for a stranger, that I *desisted* to refuse them for a long time. However, I hope my cousin will repay him as soon as he can. And now Mrs. Wakeley insists upon my daughter's return to her house directly; for she says our leaving them may create *premises*; and besides she wants her to assist in providing the finery for Betsy, who is going to India, to try to get a husband."

When Augusta found that Miss Simpson's return was a matter decided upon, she

She could make no objections. They therefore departed, after having loaded her with acknowledgments for the kindnesses she had shewn them.

C H A P. XXXV.

AUGUSTA sat waiting the arrival of Lady Mortimer, with trembling anxiety. Her emotion increased at the noise of each carriage which approached the house, and when at last she heard one actually stop at the door, her agitation almost overcame her. Lord Euston led in his sister. "Here," cried he, "is the charming ward of our uncle."

Lady Mortimer threw her arms round Augusta, and kissed her cheek with the cordiality

of maternal affection. "She is just as you described," said her Ladyship, turning to Lord Euston, "and I already feel that I love her, as you wish me to do."

Encouraged by such flattering sentiments, Augusta, as she conducted Lady Mortimer to a seat, said, in a sweet but faltering voice, "How, madam, can I thank you as I ought for this condescension."

"Indeed, my dear Miss Denbeigh," replied Lady Mortimer, "your thanks are reproaches to me. They place my omissions fully in view, and remind me of the happiness I have lost, in not claiming this pleasure long ago."

"Indeed," cried Lord Euston, gaily, "I am already jealous of your friendship; for in the mutual satisfaction you experience in knowing each other, you have consigned me to absolute oblivion."

“ Oh, no,” replied Augusta, “ that is impossible! The recollection of all your kindness, especially this valuable proof of it, affects my heart so deeply, that I find myself as poor in words as I am in every thing else.”

“ I am pained, Miss Denbeigh,” said Lady Mortimer, “ to observe the gratitude which thus oppresses your gentle spirit. I reverence the character of my uncle, although it was not permitted me to see him; and I shall be proud of shewing that attention to the object of his care, which the implacable resentment of my father debarred me from paying to him. A failure in my duty to so near a relation, and estimable a man, though involuntary on my part, has embittered many of my moments of reflection. Do not therefore consider the friendship I offer you as a favour imposed upon yourself, but be assured that you will oblige me by your acceptance of it, as it will afford me the means of making an expiation

piation to him whose delight and darling you deservedly were."

The tears which fell from Augusta's eyes, for some moments impeded her utterance, at length she said, " This tribute to the memory of the best of men, is more soothing to my heart than even your Ladyship's kindness to myself. Alas! he deserved from his own family, and from the whole world, all that respect which is due to exalted virtue: And although deeply injured by Lord Seaton, his own pure mind was free from the consciousness of offence to him. Lord Euston has called me Mr. Euston's ward, but I cannot suffer such a mistaken idea to remain in your mind. I had no affectionate friend to consign me to his care. He rescued me from poverty—he protected my helpless infancy—and he allowed the child of his bounty, to call him father! But never I am sure, did he indulge himself with the hope, that his loss would be succeeded by the protecting friendship of any part of his family; and his blessed shade would look down indignantly

upon me, if I could be guilty of the presumption of receiving it as my due."

Lady Mortimer was excessively moved. She called Augusta sweet and ingenuous girl, and again strained her to her bosom.

"An uncommon sentiment of affection," said she, "attaches me to you. It will be my pride, as it is my ambition, to supply to you the dear friend and parent you lost in Mr. Euston. Do you think you can love me, as you did him; and will you prove it to me by coming to live with me?"

The surprise this unexpected proposal gave to Augusta was painted in her expressive countenance. However she did not leave Lady Mortimer long in doubt of her acceptance of it, for, throwing herself on her knees before her, and looking with the most tender earnestness in her face, she cried, "Oh, madam, do I understand you right? Am I judged worthy the happiness of being beloved by you?"

you? and shall I indeed be permitted to devote that life to you, which you once more render of value to me, by extending thus your generous protection?"

Lord Euston had anticipated the efforts of Lady Mortimer, and re-seated Augusta in her chair.

"This," said he, "is the most delightful moment of my life, since it presents to me the two dearest objects I have on earth, thus forming a friendship which will be productive of the highest source of happiness to each."

"To me," replied Lady Mortimer, "it holds out the flattering prospect you prognosticate. The mind and manners of Miss Denbeigh have an equal influence on my heart and understanding; and I cannot tell you how much I feel myself obliged to you for having given me the pleasure of knowing her."

Lord Euston now asked Augusta if she would not give them some tea; which she immediately rung for: And a long conversation afterwards ensued, which served to confirm the favourable impression which the two ladies had received of each other.

Lady Mortimer and Lord Euston departed at a late hour, and not before it had been settled that Augusta should remove into Portland-Place the next day but one.

If Lady Mortimer was charmed with Augusta, she was no less so with her Ladyship; who, at the age of thirty-eight still remained extremely beautiful: There was a soft melancholy in her countenance, which rendered it still more interesting; and the mild dignity of her manner, which was alike unmingled with either pride or affectation, bore a strong resemblance to that of Mr. Euston. Augusta almost suffered the temporary illusion of believing that he really spoke to her, so much alike was the tone of their voices, and

so similar was the effect which her affectionate expressions had produced on her heart. She contemplated the happy prospect which Lady Mortimer's friendship opened to her view : It was decorated with all the charms with which a brilliant and youthful fancy could embellish it. One object alone seemed to cast a gloom over her vivid picture ; and this was no other than Lord Seaton ; but she comforted herself with the hope that the indulgence of Lady Mortimer, would allow her to avoid his presence, and amidst these gay ideas of felicity consigned herself to sleep.

The morning was employed in writing to Lady Merton of her good fortune, and arranging every thing for her departure on the morrow, which the kind-hearted Mrs. Mills heard of, with a mixture of pain and pleasure ; for she could not but rejoice at the good fortune which awaited her friend, though she bitterly felt the loss she was herself about to

sustain. In the evening Augusta ordered a coach, and was conveyed to Tavistock-street, for as she had not seen Miss Simpson in the course of the day, she was determined to apprise her of the change of her residence. She found the family party assembled at tea. Mrs. Wakeley received her without any embarrassment, or the least change of behaviour; Mr. Wakeley was, however, in evident confusion, and Miss Wakeley, in a sort of wild joy, ran towards her, and, throwing her arms round her neck, kissed her.

“ This family, madam,” said Mr. Simpson, “ must regard you as their benefactress; since the *re-adjournment* of their affairs is certainly owing to you.”

Mrs. Wakeley looked displeased at being reminded of her mortification; Mr. Wakeley bowed and was silent; but Miss Wakeley exclaimed, “ Oh yes! and I will be sure to return the obligation when I get to India, for
I will

I will send Miss Denbeigh one of the sweetest gold muslins that can be got."

Augusta, willing to turn the conversation, which was as unpleasant to herself as it appeared to be to others, asked Miss Wakeley how long it would be before she left England."

"I hope," said she, "in three weeks; if I can have my cloaths made in that time I shall be the happiest of human beings. Dear Miss Denbeigh don't you envy me? Surely India must be the most charming place in the world, because you know gold, diamonds, and the most beautiful things are all so plentiful there."

"It is well," replied Mr. Simpson, "if your good spirits do not *evacuate* before one half of the voyage is over."

"Indeed," answered she, "you are mistaken, Sir; I shall be sure to bring my good
D 5 spirits

spirits back again with me, because I shall then possess the only things which can give them, which are fine cloaths and a vast deal of money."

Augusta and Miss Simpson smiled at her simplicity, and as soon as there was a cessation in the conversation, the former acquainted the latter that she was going upon a visit to Lady Mortimer, and should not perhaps have it in her power to see her again for some days.

Miss Simpson said she should have lamented this circumstance, but that her father had just announed his intention of leaving town the next day but one.

They both expressed their mutual wishes that they might meet in the course of the summer, and with many expressions of kindness took leave of each other.

Mr.

Mr. Simpson gave Augusta a very cordial invitation to his house; Mrs. Wakeley assured her she should be happy to see her at all times; and Miss Wakeley repeated that she should not forget the gold muslin.

CHAP. XXXVI.

LADY MORTIMER's coach was at Mrs. Mills's door, the next morning about twelve o'clock, in which Augusta was soon conveyed to Lord Mortimer's house in Portland-Place. Lady Mortimer's reception of her was flattering and kind to the greatest degree. She begged of her to consider herself entirely at home, and free from any of those restraints upon her time, which would make it pass unpleasantly; and leading her to a most elegant dressing-room, added, that
in

in that apartment she would not be subjected to any interruptions, except when she chose to receive visitors. The house was a most noble one, and furnished with all the magnificence which modern taste could invent. Indeed there was such an air of grandeur through the whole, that Augusta, unaccustomed as she was to so much splendour, would perhaps have felt it irksome had not the engaging and easy manners of Lady Mortimer, removed the ceremony, which every thing around her seemed to impose.

Lady Mortimer had soon a crowd of visitors, to all of whom she presented Augusta with the most distinguishing marks of respect.

Lord Mortimer returned home just before they were about to retire to dress. He viewed Augusta with visible pleasure and surprise, and after the customary compliments were over, he said with a smile, " Surely, my dear Lady Mortimer, this *must* be a relation. She is the exact image of your former self; and

and her manner reminds me equally of Lord Seaton."

There was something in this speech which made Augusta blush excessively. Lady Mortimer perceived it, and guessing the cause, replied, "Indeed, my Lord, you compliment me too highly; I was never half so handsome; but I think your other comparison more just; and it is natural that Miss Denbeigh should have caught the graceful manners of her guardian, who was always called an elegant man, and said to resemble my father."

"By the way," said Lord Mortimer, "Lord Seaton dines with us to-day."

"Does he?" cried Lady Mortimer. "Then, my dear Miss Denbeigh, you shall put on your best cap, for I am greatly anxious that your charms should conquer all his prejudices. Come, let us dress directly."

The news of Lord Seaton's visit was like a thunder stroke to Augusta. To meet the
mag

man who had treated her benefactor with unmerited and unnatural cruelty, and whose injustice had compelled him to renounce the world, was to her the most dreadful circumstance which could befall her, and gladly would she at that moment have relinquished the flattering prospects which Lady Mortimer's friendship offered her, to avoid the sight of a person whom she always thought of with horror and disgust. Yet no alternative offered itself; for to object to associate with the father of Lady Mortimer, and in her own house, where she had just been received with so much kindness, was not to be thought of: She therefore prepared for the dinner party with a heavy heart, and without any of that solicitude for dress which Lady Mortimer had prescribed; who soon after tapped at her door, and they proceeded to the drawing-room together.

Resentment was a passion Augusta had never felt, except when she thought of Lord Seaton. It served only to animate her features,

tures, and give to her person that air of conscious dignity which insulted virtue often wears; so that when she entered the room, she was perhaps one of the most interesting figures that was ever seen. Lady Mortimer led her towards Lord Seaton, who, haughty as he was, could not help doing homage to such beauty: She next introduced her other guests; who were strangers, and then gave her hand to Lord Euston, who seated her in a chair next himself. The inquiries of Lord Euston prevented Augusta's observing the general attention she had excited, or the silence which her entrance occasioned. Lord Seaton was perhaps the person of all others in the party, whose curiosity was the greatest to learn who Augusta was; but the rigid observance of politeness, which he prescribed to himself and others, would not permit him to inquire of Lady Mortimer, even in a whisper.

At length dinner was announced. Lord Mortimer led Augusta, and then Lord Seaton,
de-

detaining Lady Mortimer last, asked her, Who that charming young lady was.

“ A Miss Denbeigh,” replied Lady Mortimer, “ and her beauty is her least perfection.”

“ Denbeigh ! Denbeigh !” repeated Lord Seaton, as they proceeded to the dining-parlour. “ Pray, of what family is she ?”

Here however they had reached the door, and her Ladyship had only time to say, “ She is an orphan, and of a private family in Wales.”

A vacant chair had been left next to Augusta, which she saw the Earl take possession of with much chagrin. His civilities however for some time were not very persecuting. In fact the words uttered by Lady Mortimer, *she is an orphan of a private family*, had almost detached his thoughts from her : But as there is in real beauty a something which forces itself
on

on the heart, and commands where every thing else would fail, respect from the most haughty, so by degrees the noble peer again submitted to its influence. Addressing himself to her, he said, " Pray, madam, are you related to the Denbeighs of Beacon Castle?"

" No, Sir," replied she.

" Nor to Lady Basinstroke, who was a Miss Denbeigh?"

" I have not that honour, my Lord."

" I have somewhere else," resumed he, " met with the name of Denbeigh, though I cannot just now recollect where: But indeed I have not been in Wales since I was a young man, and those families which are not ennobled, soon escape ones remembrance. The romantic scenery of Wales is better imprinted on my memory, than the persons I met with there."

Augusta

Augusta was somewhat disconcerted by his efforts to recall the name of Denbeigh, which she too well remembered had met his eye, at the bottom of a letter, which she herself had written.

Lord Euston, who watched every turn of her expressive countenance with trembling solicitude, and suspected her embarrassment proceeded from Lord Seaton's scrupulous enquiries after her connexions, which he wished to relieve her from, now said, "If your Lordship is an admirer of such scenes, you will be charmed with the sketches Miss Denbeigh has made from them with her pencil."

"I shall think myself honoured, no doubt, by the sight of them," replied Lord Seaton; "though after having viewed the sublime and beautiful views with which Switzerland and Italy abound, I can scarcely think any which our own island produces will greatly charm me."

This

This ungracious speech, which seemed calculated to repress the pleasure which Lord Euston had betrayed in speaking of Augusta's performance, hurt Lady Mortimer so much, that she could not recover her spirits the whole time she remained at table. As soon, therefore, as it could be done with propriety, she and Augusta quitted the room.

When they were alone, she said, " There is a subject on which I must, though it pains me, speak to Miss Denbeigh: But perhaps she has heard of my father's peculiarities, and if so, all I have occasion to say, is, that for my sake I hope she will overlook them."

" Your condescension and your goodness equally affect me, madam," replied Augusta, " and if your discernment has discovered any dislike in me to Lord Seaton, I hope you will place it to his behaviour to Mr. Euston; and be assured, that as I am neither entitled to his civilities, or can indeed merit them, I shall
not

not have the presumption to flatter myself with the hope of receiving them."

"I entertain better expectations," replied Lady Mortimer. "By your means I hope to convince my father of the injustice he does my uncle's memory; and when once he becomes your admirer, it follows of course that he will be your friend."

The gentlemen obeyed the summons to tea, and then separated to attend their evening engagements. Lord Mortimer and Lord Euston alone remained, to attend Lady Mortimer and Augusta, to Lady Betty Castleton's ball, whither they repaired about twelve o'clock, after having devoted an hour to the sweet powers of harmony. Lord Euston was so importunate with Augusta to dance, that she was obliged to remind him of the impossibility there was of her having been able to attain that accomplishment. When Lady Mortimer understood this, she declined mixing with the dancers, and they sauntered through

through the different rooms, and amused themselves with observing the company. Having stopped in one of them, to partake of some sideboard refreshments, on turning round Augusta perceived Miss Felton standing very near her. As the capricious behaviour of that young Lady had been forgotten, as soon as it had ceased to offend, she approached her with an air of politeness and good humour, and paid her compliments. For some moments Miss Felton appeared as if trying to recollect her; when suddenly, but coolly exclaiming, "Miss Denbeigh, I think." She drew up her head, made her a low curtsy, and then turned to the gentleman with whom she had been before conversing.

"My presumption has been punished," said Augusta, addressing herself to Lord Euston; "for I have ventured to address a fine Lady, who has totally forgot me in a few months."

"She

“ She is a compound of folly and affectation,” replied he ; “ but I see she is about punishing me worse than she has done you, by convincing me that she remembers me. So pray let us try to avoid her.”

They directly quitted the room, and soon after took their leaves of Lady Betty Castleton, and returned to Portland-Place.



CHAP. XXXVII.

SEVERAL days elapsed in a round of agreeable amusements and domestic pleasures; for Lord and Lady Mortimer were excessively attached to each other, and while they partook of the pleasures of high life still found their greatest felicity at home.

Their only child, a son, about fifteen years of age, was at this time at Geneva with his tutor; for they had wisely resolved to remove him, at an early age, from those scenes

fol

folly and dissipation which so frequently enervate the mind, and destroy the fairest blossoms of youth.

The partiality they both entertained for Augusta became every day more visible; and she now began to feel for them a considerable portion of that affectionate tenderness, which had lain dormant in her bosom since the death of Mr. Euston.

Lady Mortimer frequently preferred her society to the pleasures which courted her abroad; and they often passed the whole morning together, in the calm and rational enjoyment of each other's conversation.

She was surprised at the great store of knowledge she found in her mind; at the strength of her understanding, and the solidity of her judgment. Often, however, in the midst of these conversations, a deep melancholy would seize her; and once the tears streamed from her eyes. Augusta strove,

by every delicate attention, to sooth and restore her spirits; conceiving that such agitation, without any apparent cause, must proceed from malady.

Lady Mortimer perceived her mistake; and pressing her hand between hers, she said, "Ah, my sweet friend! I have a canker here, which robs me of my peace, and destroys my health; I will not long conceal my secret from you, since I hope to find relief from your gentle soothings; but at present I can say no more." And with this she arose and left her.

Augusta was greatly astonished at what she had heard. Lady Mortimer, who appeared blessed with every gift both of fortune and nature; who experienced the solaces of friendship, and the felicity of refined love;—how was it possible that she could be unhappy? Surely it could not be her own distresses of which she complained: Perhaps her benevolent bosom sorrowed for the miseries of another.

This

This idea brought with it a suggestion that gave her real pain. Lord Euston, thought she, still cherishes his former partiality, and has made his sister the confidant of his passion. She doats upon him—she will be his advocate—and I must either become the most ungrateful, or the most miserable of wretches. Reflection however at length relieved her from these apprehensions. The uniform propriety of Lord Euston's behaviour, and the delicacy of his attentions, (so different from what they had formerly been) led her to hope that these suspicions were groundless. She next turned her thoughts to Lord Seaton: His insupportable pride, his moroseness, and the severity of his manners to his children, had perhaps too deeply afflicted Lady Mortimer. This circumstance was the only one she could find, in the whole catalogue of human woes, likely to affect Lady Mortimer: and although it certainly did not tend to lessen her dislike of Lord Seaton, yet she generously determined to adapt herself more to his humours, and study to please him; flattering

herself that if she did not succeed with his Lordship, it would at least prove pleasing to her friend. Just as she had come to this resolution, she was told that the coach was in waiting, to convey her to Bond-street.

Lady Mortimer had kindly mentioned to her, that she wished her to have the attendance of a servant; and as her Ladyship had no one particularly in view, Augusta described Mrs. Davies; and related as much of her history as she could, without repeating the share she had in rescuing her from want. Lady Mortimer thought her exactly the sort of woman that would suit Augusta; and it was in order to engage her, that Augusta was now proceeding to Bond-street.

The good Mrs. Mills almost shed tears of joy at seeing Augusta, and hearing she was so happy; and Mrs. Davies, who was quickly summoned, shewed the greatest satisfaction at the offers which were made her; and promised
to

to enter upon her new office the following day.

This being settled, Augusta hastened back to Portland-Place, as they were engaged to dine with Lord Seaton; and she wished to display, upon that occasion, a most beautiful dress, with which Lady Mortimer had presented her.

When they were ready, Lord Mortimer complimented her upon her appearance; and told her he believed she had a design upon the Earl's heart. She smiled her reply, and they drove off.

On their arrival at his house, they proceeded across a spacious hall, through a range of servants, in liveries richly laced, to the drawing-room, where Lord Seaton was waiting to receive them; which he did with as much ceremony, as if they had been the greatest strangers. He beckened to Lady Mortimer to take a seat, the third from the top of the

room ; but Augusta perceived he was at some difficulty in placing her ; as there would have been great awkwardness, in leaving several vacant chairs between them and Lady Mortimer ; which he yet seemed to wish to preserve for some other guests : She therefore begged to be at a distance from the fire, and sat down in a window near to the door. Lord Seaton was pleased to find that she had made so proper a distinction for herself ; and as he had stationed himself there, to be ready to receive his visitors, she engaged him at intervals in conversation.

All this parade seemed but the prelude to a gloomy visit ; and Augusta heartily wished it over.

The company consisted of the Prince and Princess of Cassino, Lady Elizabeth Barton, Lord and Lady Marlborough and their two daughters, two Neapolitan Noblemen, and Lord Euston.

Dinner

Dinner was served up in a most magnificent style; and Lord Seaton had placed his guests at table, with the same scrupulous exactness as he had before done in the drawing-room; of course Augusta sat at the bottom, and next to Lord Euston; which was a happy circumstance to her, as she was totally unknown to most of the company, and equally over-looked by the Earl, amidst the many right honourables, who engrossed his attention.

After the cloth was removed, the conversation, in compliment to the strangers, fell upon Italy. It was carried on chiefly in French; and at length turned on the beauty of the Italian ladies, which all the gentlemen, and especially Lord Euston, highly extolled.

The Princess fixed her eyes upon him, and smiling, said, in Italian, which she knew few of the company understood perfectly; "Ah, my Lord, your politeness exceeds your sincerity; for the finest women Italy can boast are abundantly excelled by your beautiful neighbour."

The cheeks of Augusta were immediately suffused with the deepest scarlet; and the Princess perceiving that she was understood, gave a most graceful turn to what she had said. She afterwards addressed herself frequently to her, as did the two Neapolitan Noblemen; and her answers soon convinced them, that she was an entire mistress of their language.

The Earl's attention seemed to be revived, by that which was shewn her by his guests; and from having been the most neglected person in the room, Augusta, by this fortunate circumstance, now appeared of some importance.

When the ladies retired, the Princess of Cassino attached herself to Augusta, and talked to her of their authors, their painters, and their musicians; and was delighted, as well as surprised to find, that she was acquainted with the compositions of each.

Music

Musick was proposed; the gentlemen joined them; and the taste of Augusta excited the highest applause.

Lord Seaton now became one of her warmest admirers; reminded her that he was to see some of her drawings; and fixed the following morning to call upon her for that purpose.

The evening concluded as pleasantly, as the former part of it had been unpromising to Augusta; and what her own beauty and intrinsic worth could not procure for her, was thus accidentally accomplished, by the flattering marks of attention paid her by the Prince and Princess of Cassino; who, though strangers, from the superiority of their rank, had been able to conquer the proud and prejudiced spirit of Lord Seaton.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

LORD and Lady Mortimer, whose fondness for Augusta increased momentarily, observed the change of Lord Seaton's sentiments with abundant pleasure; and the satisfaction which she saw it gave them, determined her to proceed in the plan she had laid down.

The hour was now arrived, when she expected to see him in Portland-Place; and Lord
and

and Lady Mortimer were not less impatient than herself. He at last made his appearance; and having apologized to them, with much ceremony, for being later than his appointment, he sat down to view the drawings. Their various beauties were criticised, with all the precision to be expected from a person who had passed the Alps.

Lady Mortimer observed, that there was a piece or two missing, which she had particularly admired; Augusta therefore went to fetch them from her dressing-room; and in her absence Lord Seaton protested that he should treat the Princess of Cassino to take a view of them, as they were the most perfect things of the kind he had ever seen. Amongst the second collection which Augusta produced, there was a fine sketch of the village where Mr. Euston lived.

“ This is a sweet place,” said Lord Seaton. “ Is it from nature or fancy ?”

“ Oh, from nature,” replied Augusta, forgetting herself in the retrospection. “ It is the spot, on which the happy days of my youth have been past. It is the seat of my adored and lamented Mr. Euston.”

“ Of whom did you say, madam ?” asked Lord Seaton, with a countenance inflamed with surprise, and a voice raised by resentment.

“ Of Mr. Euston,” replied the terrified Augusta; who too soon perceived the error she had been guilty of.

“ And who are you then ?” demanded he, in an authoritative tone.

“ She is,” said Lady Mortimer, “ the adopted child of your brother.”

“ And have you,” replied Lord Seaton, his eye darting fire, “ have you dared to concur in the imposition, which has been practised
against

against me? Whether she be the real, or adopted child of Mr. Euston, she is equally obnoxious to me; and I renounce you as my daughter, if you do not instantly withdraw your protection from her."

"The protection she has found in my house," replied Lord Mortimer, "she has highly merited; and I will not be dictated to, even by Lord Seaton, whom I shall receive there."

"Oh!" exclaimed Augusta, with uplifted hands, "let me not be the cause of an unhappy quarrel between you. I will instantly go—indeed I will directly leave the house."

As she spoke this, she advanced towards the door; which was suddenly opened by Lord Euston. Augusta's last words, which he had heard, and the countenance of each of the party, immediately discovered to him the scene which had passed. He opposed her departure;

parture ; and cried, in a voice of reproach,
 “ Will Lady Mortimer consent to this ? ”

“ Oh, no,” replied her Ladyship : “ I cannot, I will not be parted from this dear girl. My father’s prejudices I cannot im-
 bibe : In every other respect he may com-
 mand my obedience.”

“ And is it thus,” replied Lord Seaton,
 “ that my children conspire against me ? Was
 it not enough to make me degrade myself,
 and the rank I hold in the world, by receiving
 this obscure character into my house, and in-
 troducing her to my friends ? Will they also,
 in addition to this, still countenance her, and
 openly rebel against me ? ”

“ Call her not an obscure character,”
 cried Lord Euston. “ She would do honour
 to the most exalted station : And I myself
 have witnessed how tenderly she was educated
 by my uncle.”

“ Gra-

“ Gracious heaven ! ” exclaimed Lord Seaton, “ to what wretchedness am I destined ! Perhaps the next moment I may be doomed to hear, that an artful girl, brought up perhaps with that design alone, is to seduce my son, and share in my family-honours.”

“ I will own,” replied Lord Euston, with great calmness, “ that I have adored Miss Denbeigh, almost to distraction—that I have offered her my hand ;—and that it would have been the glory of my life, to have contributed to the felicity of hers. Her mind however is too elevated, to be biassed by that sort of honour, on which your Lordship alone lays a stress. She has rejected my addresses ; and I have therefore resolved, that the family honours, about which you are so solicitous, shall end in myself.”

“ This is insupportable,” cried Lord Seaton, almost choaked with rage ; “ but know, Sir, that, though you inherit my family honours,

nours, the wealth, which can alone support them, is at my disposal. And never shall it be divided with a wretch, who, some time ago, was a suppliant for my bounty."

"That, my lord," said Augusta, "is a reflection, and almost the only one, which I cannot suffer to pass unanswered from your lordship. In the letter which I wrote, to acquaint you of Mr. Euston's death, I informed you, that his will had bequeathed every thing to me; and instead of soliciting your assistance, I offered to relinquish his little property, if you thought you had a prior right to it. Alas! his only worldly care was to leave me independent; and so benevolent were his heart and his precepts, that of his resentment against your lordship, for which, doubtless, he had just cause, I never heard him speak but once."

The mild, but dignified manner of Augusta kept Lord Seaton silent for a moment; and Lord Mortimer, willing to avail himself of
an

an interval, which he thought favourable, thus addressed him :

“ The unhappy dispute, which subsisted between you whilst living, does not, I hope, continue with the dust of your departed brother. Miss Denbeigh was dear to him; she is so to us. Her innocence, her beauty, her unprotected state, all entitle her to the asylum she has found here. Your lordship has mentioned your rank; is not mine equal? or am I less tenacious in the proper support of it? How ridiculous would be our pretensions to birth, if pride, arrogance, and caprice, were to annihilate the feelings of humanity, and the dictates of reason? Perhaps Miss Denbeigh bears a relation to us; but whether she does or not, she is enobled by her education, by her virtues, and by her accomplishments: And I flatter myself that your lordship will be prevailed upon to sacrifice an ill-placed prejudice, and to share with Lady Mortimer and myself, in the pleasure of bestowing upon her those

those marks of affection, which she appears so well to deserve."

"No, never," exclaimed Lord Seaton. "Nor will I ever again enter these doors, until I am assured that my daughter has given up a connexion so disgraceful to her, as well as displeasing to me."

"To give up our own opinions, and our own pleasures, to a caprice altogether so unreasonable, would be a folly," said Lord Mortimer, "of which I cannot be guilty. We shall regret that we have not the honour of seeing your lordship here; but must console ourselves with the reflection, that we have done nothing which ought to excite your displeasure."

"This cool insolence," cried Lord Seaton, ringing the bell furiously, "is intolerable." And then turning to Augusta, and stamping violently with his foot, he said, "How darest thou, reptile as thou art, stand thus

thus serene amidst the storm thou hast produced?"

"Oh, not serene;" replied Augusta, the tears streaming from her eyes; "my heart is torn with a thousand agonizing sensations. Your lordship has awakened the keen remembrance of my former happiness, and shewn me the bitter portion which now remains. Terrible as is the necessity of such a resolution, I declare to you it is my unalterable determination to leave this house to night. I will spare the generous bosoms of Lord and Lady Mortimer; the conflict they sustain between duty to you, and pity for the unoffending object of your hatred; and I will preserve to your lordship the unalienated affection of your children, if my departure can do it."

"Can you be insensible, my father, to such goodness as this?" asked Lady Mortimer, whose tears fell almost as fast as Augusta's.

"If

"If her artifices have imposed upon you," replied he, "let her take care how she trifles with my resentment."

And having before ordered his carriage to the door, he abruptly left the room.

CHAP. XXXIX.

THE manner in which Augusta had sustained this scene, so extraordinary in itself, and so insulting to her delicacy, had more deeply than ever interested her three friends in her favour. Lord Mortimer soothed her with the most affectionate expressions; and concluded by giving her an assurance, that he would consider her in future as his child. Lady Mortimer confirmed these pleasing promises; and Lord Euston seemed already to have forgot his father's anger, in the satisfaction they afforded him.

Augusta

Augusta, having struggled to compose her spirits sufficiently, for the design she had in view, at last said, " Words almost fail me, when I would express my gratitude for the exalted and affecting proofs of goodness, with which I have been honoured by this family. Doomed as I am, to experience the transient view of happiness, and then to be plunged into fresh disappointments, the recollection of it will perhaps support me, in the severe trials which may yet await me. O Lady Mortimer ! my kind,—my generous friend ! how shall I bid you adieu ? and yet it must be done ! "

" Indeed, my sweet Augusta," cried she, " it is decreed otherwise : We will not part."

" If I could be selfish enough to avail myself of these flattering sentiments," replied Augusta, " I am sure I should not long be able to preserve your good opinion ; since I should then lose that conscious rectitude of
prin-

principle, which can best and alone intitle me to it. The enthusiasm of your benevolence conceals from you, at the present moment, a truth which will be heard: That, in the practice of that virtue which you love, obedience to the will of a father is one of the highest duties it imposes."

Lady Mortimer, Lord Euston, and Lord Mortimer, looked at her with surprise and admiration; but did not attempt to interrupt her: She therefore proceeded.

"In thus exiling myself from you, my dearest hope will be, that some fortunate coincidence of events may restore me to that protection which I relinquish; and that in the mean time I shall retain the undiminished regard of my three noble friends."

"Your eloquence opposes its own success," exclaimed Lord Mortimer; "for every word you utter opens a fresh source for our
admi-

admiration, and binds us more closely to you."

"Ah! my Lord," said she, "the unfortunate have but one consolation in adversity, which is that of having acted rightly. I see, and feel my duty, in the present instance, and I will not depart from it. I have (continued she, blushing from excess of agitation) one wish, which I hope may be granted. It is, that I may be permitted to leave the house, without taking a last farewell,"

"Good God!" cried Lady Mortimer, "what inflexible integrity does this dear girl possess."

"I" replied Lord Euston, in a melancholy voice, "know her resolution too well to oppose it."

"Well," said Lady Mortimer, "we will at least wave all thoughts of parting for the present, and consider——"

"Oh

"Oh pardon me," cried Augusta; "my word has been passed. Davis is, I suppose, by this time here. She will soon have packed up my cloaths, and then——" She could not finish the sentence.

"And what then are the designs of Miss Denbeigh?" asked Lord Mortimer with chagrin.

"To devote herself to retirement," replied she; "and to be guided in her choice of it, by the advice of Lord and Lady Mortimer, if they will condescend to bestow it."

"You revive my almost broken heart by asking it," said Lady Mortimer. "The apartments in the lodge, at Denmore-Park, shall be fitted up for you; and then we shall be within a short walk of each other."

"Ah, madam," answered Augusta, trying to smile through her tears, "Is it thus that you would cheat yourself? The plan on

which I wish to consult you, is my return to Mr. Euston's villa. The present inhabitants are worthy people, and will, I am sure, receive me. Alas ! I left it, only because I had not then the means of support ; but, since that time, the unexpected payment of Mr. Euston's debts has made me so rich, that I can amply recompense them. Davis may go with me ; and surely amidst those scenes which once constituted my felicity, I cannot be wholly unhappy."

" Ah, Miss Denbeigh !" said Lord Euston, " I too plainly perceive the whole of your design, in fixing upon so remote a retreat. It is intended as an absolute exclusion of us."

" And to what purpose would be my retreat," replied Augusta, with a deep sigh, " if that terrible, but necessary design was not to be accomplished. Lord Seaton might then with justice accuse me of hypocrisy."

This

"This noble minded girl," said Lord Mortimer, "is superiour to us all; and her exalted sentiments shall be no longer opposed. Go, my dear Miss Denbeigh, secure in the approbation of your own heart, and assured of the remembrance you have impressed on ours. Neither distance nor change of situation can produce an alteration in our sentiments; and we shall unceasingly endeavour to regain you, in a way that may be pleasant to your own just and delicate feelings. In the mean time command me, in any way that may be useful to you; and if you would have me believe, that you really entertain a regard for me and Lady Mortimer, do not object to our making you more independent, if we cannot make you more happy."

Augusta's heart was too full, to make any reply. She waved her hand, in token of her acknowledgement; and, availing herself of the permission granted to her, hurried out of the room. She reached her own apartment with

difficulty; and, insensible to the presence of Davis, threw herself on the sofa, and gave way to the violence of her emotions.

The poor woman was too much surprised, to offer her assistance for some moments; however, she at last entreated her to take a glass of water; which Augusta drank, and soon became more composed. She then informed Davis, that there was a necessity for her immediate departure from Lord Mortimer's; and gave her directions to pack up her cloaths, and follow her in a coach with them to Mrs. Mills's. She said she should herself go there in a chair; and sent her to desire a footman to call one directly.

If Mrs. Davis had possessed the talents of a modern Abigail, she would have set her wits to work, to discover the cause of this sudden revolution; that she might have conveyed the intelligence into the house-keeper's room, and from thence through the whole family: That being the means, by which secrets

crets of a family nature are generally propagated. She, however, received her directions with silent respect; and immediately set about the performance of them.

During her absence, and whilst Augusta was putting on her hat and cloak, somebody tapped at her door. She opened it, and found it was Lady Mortimer.

“ My Lord,” said she, “ has revived my spirits, by promising me, that our separation shall be a very short one. He has taken upon himself the arrangement of your journey; and our travelling chaise, attended by two servants, will be with you in Bond-street, at any hour you shall appoint, to-morrow morning; so that we shall be assured of your being properly protected on the road. And now, my most dear friend, let me entreat, that you will accept of these two miniatures of Lord Mortimer and myself: and as often as you look at mine, assure yourself, that my thoughts are anxiously employed about you.”

Augusta pressed the miniatures to her lips, and was beginning to express her acknowledgements; when Davis opened the door, and told her the chair was in waiting. Lady Mortimer at the sound of her voice turned round; and as soon as Davis had a full view of her face, she gave a loud shriek, and fell senseless on the floor.

“ Gracious heaven ! ” exclaimed Lady Mortimer, “ it is Baylis ! ”

A deadly paleness overspread her countenance; and Augusta had but just time to support her to the sofa, before she fainted. Distracted with terror, Augusta rang her bell most vehemently; and, as no body came instantly to her assistance, (as indeed it was impossible they should) she darted along the gallery, and was proceeding down the stairs, with a swiftness that would have endangered her safety; when she was met by Lord Mortimer, and Lord Euston, who had been alarmed by such an unusual ringing of the bell.

Lord

Lord Euston caught her in his arms ; but, by this time, she could only articulate, " Lady Mortimer;" and point to the dressing-room. Lord Mortimer entered it first, and beheld the two lifeless objects. The servants, however, were now all in motion ; and Augusta, who had regained courage, by the sight of assistance, now applied the remedies which were offered her." Lady Mortimer was the first that recovered. On opening her eyes, she looked wildly about her, and said, " Where, where is my child ?"

Lord Mortimer, supposing she meant Augusta, answered, " She is here, my love."

" Oh, my Lord !" cried she, " do you not recollect Baylis ?"

" Baylis !" repeated Lord Mortimer, in a voice of astonishment ; " can it be possible ?"

“ For God’s sake, what is the meaning of all this ?” said Lord Euston to Augusta.

“ Indeed,” replied she, though scarce able to speak, “ I know not.”

The surgeon, who had been sent for by Lord Mortimer, on the first alarm, now arrived ; and, as Mrs. Davis still continued to shew no other signs of life, than a few convulsive starts, Lady Mortimer insisted that his first cares should be employed about her : He therefore instantly bled her ; and that operation recovered her so far, that she was able to swallow a cordial, which he had brought with him.

Lady Mortimer now rejected all the assistance, which was proposed to her ; and declared, her recovery depended solely on the information she received from Mrs. Davis.

“ May we not question her ?” asked Lord Mortimer ; whose countenance now indicated the perturbation of his mind.

“ Cer-

"Certainly," replied the surgeon. "I apprehend no danger from that."

The servants were now dismissed; and Lady Mortimer, turning her languid eyes upon Davis, said, "Tell me if my child be yet alive?"

"Oh, madam," replied she, "the punishment I have long deserved, for my breach of confidence to you, is approaching fast. I, however, trust, that the precious deposit you left with me, is yet living, and——"

"Ah! say but that," cried Lady Mortimer, springing with ecstasy from the sofa, "and I forgive the rest."

"My life!" exclaimed Lord Mortimer, "these violent emotions are too much for you. Indeed they are. Let us convey you to your chamber; and I will collect from Baylis the information she has to give."

“ Oh! do not tear me, in my last moments, from my dear Lady,” cried Mrs. Davis. “ Suffer me to avow my guilt to her, whose pardon can alone intitle me to mercy.”

“ I do pardon—I do forgive you,” said Lady Mortimer; “ for, oh, you have told me that my child is yet living! Say but where she is, and I am happy.”

“ As I believe, that I shall not long survive,” replied Mrs. Davis, “ and the sense of my guilt has long made me indifferent to life,—it is my wish, that my remaining moments may be devoted to a full confession of my crimes. Alas! the punishment I deserved, would long since have overwhelmed me, had not that angel in human shape (looking at Augusta) been my preserver. The confidence which your Ladyship reposed in me, (continued she, addressing herself to Lady Mortimer) on your private marriage with Captain Amesley, I never forfeited; and it was that, no doubt, which made you intrust me with
the

the care of the lovely infant, whose birth you were solicitous to keep a secret from Lord Seaton. I had remained concealed in Chester some months; and my little charge had daily improved in strength and beauty, when I unfortunately became acquainted with Mr. Davis. As I passed for a widow, and, by the allowance of your Ladyship, was enabled to live handsomely, he soon made proposals to me, which were at length accepted, and we were married. He had before this professed himself an Irish merchant; but I too soon found, that he might more properly have been termed an Irish adventurer: However, as there had been some duplicity practised on my part, as well as his, I had no great right to anger. About this time, a handsome remittance arrived from your Ladyship; and it was then, that I made a confession of my real situation to my husband. This sum of money he thought would settle him advantageously in his own country; and, partly by threats, and partly by entreaties, he prevailed upon me to elope with him. The dear little babe, whom

I loved as my own, I would not be parted from; and we travelled across the country, without any direction, that we might not be traced. The fatigue of travelling with such a burthen, distressed me greatly; and it was then, that my husband first proposed to me to leave it behind. I was deaf to his advice, until chance directed us to a village, where, exhausted with fatigue, we had stopped for refreshment. I attended not much to the conversation of my husband, who, I found, was enquiring the character of the neighbouring gentry; but after we had quitted the village, he told me, that he had learnt, there was a most extraordinary man lived thereabouts, whose humanity and hospitality were so great, that he was sure he would take good care of the dear little infant, whom he had therefore determined to leave at his door. Intreaties and expostulations had no effect upon him more: And, in short, my Lady, he made me take the few things we had with us, out of a small deal box, which he had carried; and in this box the precious infant was left, at
the

the door of the clergyman, at three o'clock one fine morning."

At this moment, Augusta clasped her hands together in a wild agony, which interrupted the continuance of Davis's narrative; and fixing her eyes stedfastly upon her, she cried, "Oh! say but that the name of this clergyman was Euston! and this blessed moment——" She could utter no more, but threw herself at the feet of Lord and Lady Mortimer, exhausted by the violence of her emotions.

"It is—it must be my child!" exclaimed Lady Mortimer; and she sunk down beside her.

It is impossible to describe the scene which ensued. Lord Mortimer was himself almost reduced to the same state as his wife and daughter. Lord Euston shed tears of joy; and Mrs. Davis, revived by so happy a discovery, had fallen upon her knees, in gratitude to the Almighty. When speech was at length

length restored to them, the interview was still more affecting.

“Is it possible,” cried Augusta, “that heaven can mean to bless me thus?”

“Oh my daughter!” exclaimed Lord Mortimer, straining her in his arms. “How proud I am to find *such* a daughter.”

“My heart ever owned her,” said Lady Mortimer.

“And mine too,” added Lord Euston; “and sure I now may be beloved as an uncle.”

“Davis,” said Lord Mortimer, “the injury you have formerly done us, is totally obliterated, by the happiness of this moment: Retire, and take care of yourself.”

“Oh,” cried Augusta, addressing herself to Lady Mortimer, “I conjure you, by the
name

name of mother,—the first time the dear appellation has passed my lips,—to forgive the penitent, and restore her to your favour.”

“ Yes, my beloved child,” replied her Ladyship, “ I do forgive her; for I can refuse you nothing;—and I even bend in gratitude to the Almighty Disposer of human events, that such has hitherto been your lot: Since we find you now, all that the fondest parents could wish, in mind, manners, and understanding; which perhaps, had you been educated by us, might have been perverted, by the influence of a too dissipated world. To your good, your great, your valuable preceptor, our hearts can never do sufficient homage.”

CHAP. XL.

LORD and Lady Mortimer now gave orders to be denied to all visitors, for the remainder of the day. The tumult of their joy required retirement; and was too sacred, to be prophaned by the eye of idle curiosity. As soon as they were sufficiently composed, they begged their daughter, now Lady Augusta Amesley, to relate the incidents of her life; which she did, by repeating to them the very affecting history, which had been given her by Mr. Euston, a few days before

fore his death; as well as the manner of his death, and the distresses in which it had involved her. Her journey to London, and her first introduction to Lady Merton, were not omitted;—and, lest her quitting so amiable a protectress, might give rise to any unfavourable suspicions, she now, for the first time, related the events, which had determined her to leave Merton Lodge. Lord and Lady Mortimer experienced a variety of emotions, during this little history. They shed tears over the misfortunes and death of Mr. Euston; but these were effaced by the admiration which succeeded, at the magnanimity and discretion of their child. Although Lord Euston was present, she could not suppress her grateful acknowledgments, for the many acts of friendship he had shewn her; and, without hinting at his partiality, painted in the most animated language his amiable solicitude to advise and serve her. The fond parents heard this, with inexpressible delight; and loaded him with fresh marks of affection.

“ And

“ And now,” concluded Lady Augusta, “ I have to produce the garments, in which I was found. Mr. Euston carefully preserved them in a little cabinet, where they still remain.”

She immediately fetched them ; and Lady Mortimer recognised the cap to have been the work of her own hands.

Lady Mortimer now briefly related to her daughter, that she had been prevailed upon to marry Captain Amesley, without the knowledge of Lord Seaton ; as the only objection to his consent, was, she said, the want of a title, which was not of the least consequence to her happiness. The unexpected death of two of his cousins soon, however, put him in possession of his family honours ; upon which Lord Seaton renewed the treaty, and their having been before married, was carefully concealed from him. Davis’s elopement with her infant had nearly (she said) broken her heart. She had an absolute confidence in this
woman

woman, who had lived with her from her childhood: And that she should withdraw herself from the reward which her services claimed, and secrete herself and the child, who must be a heavy expence, was so strange and inexplicable a circumstance, that they could never account for it. Every possible search had been made after them. Lord Mortimer himself had traversed almost the whole of England; but never could gain a single piece of intelligence, to guide him in his inquiries. This had embittered all her other enjoyments, and thrown a gloom over her countenance. It was (she said) the very secret, she was one day about to disclose to her.— My mother died (concluded Lady Mortimer) whilst I was an infant; and, as I have always been told, of a broken heart. She sacrificed her own choice to the ambition of her friends; which she never afterwards forgave herself for.”

Lady Augusta availed herself of the first moment she could, to visit Davis. The poor

poor wretch threw herself upon her knees, and supplicated her forgiveness.

“ Indeed, indeed, my good Davis,” said she, “ I have nothing to forgive. What you did has eventually proved the greatest blessing : But tell me, did you know that it was to one of my own family, that you consigned me ?”

“ I did not,” replied Mrs. Davis ; “ for if I had, I think I should have tried to cheat the vigilance of my husband, and have concealed a written acknowledgement in the box.”

Lady Augusta lifted up her eyes to heaven, in gratitude to that good providence, which had thus brought about the discovery of a circumstance, that was involved in so much mystery.

“ The remainder of your history,” said she, “ I am anxious to hear : What became of you afterwards ?”

“ A

" A series of distresses," replied Davis,
 " which it would pain your benevolent bo-
 som to hear, attended us from that moment.
 Remorse of conscience left me no intervals
 of ease ; and the business which my husband
 began, with the money that was the price
 of my iniquity, never prospered. Bankruptcy
 ensued ; and, to escape the justice of his credi-
 tors, we flew from Ireland. Strangers as we
 were in London, hard labour was his only re-
 fuge. So scanty an allowance soon reduced
 us to all the horrors of want and misery ;
 but of that I need not speak, since you, ma-
 dam, were the administering angel, that re-
 lieved our wretchedness. Often have I been
 tempted to avow my guilt to you ; but I
 withheld the confession, until the means of
 reparation were within my power. Ever
 since you placed me in a situation, in which I
 could earn a comfortable livelihood, I have
 almost starved myself, in order to lay up
 money to take a journey into Wales, to dis-
 cover, if possible, what became of the sweet
 little Matilda ; for until I learnt that, I durst
 not

" A

not face my lady. Indeed I could never learn, whether she was even living; as I knew nothing of Captain Amesley's having a title; and was 'afraid of being too inquisitive, lest it should create suspicions."

"I have it much at heart," said Lady Augusta, "to send my kind friend, Mrs. Mills, an account of this discovery. You appear so well now, Davis, that, perhaps, it will do you no harm, to take a chair and go to her."

"Oh no, madam," replied Davis. "I assure you it will do me good to walk, and communicate the joyful tidings to her."

"I insist upon it, that you do not walk," said Augusta. "I shall dress very little for dinner, as we see no company this evening; so that you may set out directly, and need not hurry yourself in your return. Give my love to the dear good woman, and tell her,

my

my prosperity can never make me forget the friend, who so kindly soothed, and supported me in adversity ; and that I will call upon her, the first moment I have it in my power."

Davis flew to obey the commands of her Lady ; who, after a trifling alteration in her dress, returned to the drawing-room, and acquainted Lady Mortimer with what she had done.

" I shall be most happy, my sweet love," said her Ladyship, " to evince my gratitude to all your friends. Lady Merton and Mrs. Mills have very high claims upon me. The former, for her discernment of your merit, when appearances were so greatly against you ; the latter, for such disinterested friendship, and goodness of heart, as is rarely to be found among persons of her station in life."

After dinner a consultation was held, on the proper mode of acquainting Lord Seaton with this discovery. Lord Mortimer, with that

true dignity of mind, which is equally distant from pride or arrogance, determined to see him that very evening; and to relate whatever had been concealed from him, as well as the transactions of the present day. Lord Euston offered to accompany him; and, whilst they proceeded on this errand, the two ladies passed an hour, in the sweet and endearing exchange of reciprocal affection.

Lord Seaton was fortunately at home, and disengaged; and when the names of Lord Mortimer and Lord Euston were announced to him, he flattered himself they attended him, with a view to make concessions; and therefore he received them very graciously.

Lord Mortimer immediately entered upon the subject of his visit: He first deprecated Lord Seaton's forgiveness for an action, which the ardency of his affection, and the impetuosity of youth had plunged him into; and then acknowledged his private marriage. He next briefly related the loss of their child, who
had,

had, in consequence of their clandestine marriage, been secreted; and lastly declared, that they had that day discovered the daughter, for whom so many tears had been shed, and so much research been made in vain.

Lord Seaton heard him with great surprise, mixed with his usual degree of stateliness; and, when he had finished, asked, with coolness, where, and in what situation, he had found his daughter.

“ I found her,” replied Lord Mortimer, “ in my own house, and in the person of the all accomplished, but rejected Augusta Denbeigh.”

“ I cannot suppose,” said Lord Seaton, “ that such a story as this can have been raised, for the purpose of reconciling me to her remaining in your family. Even my children could not, with impunity, practise such an imposition against me. I would therefore ask you, my Lord, what reparation

you can make to a young creature, for the deprivation of rank, which you have made her suffer, as well as for the obscurity, to which you have condemned her? As for myself, I have little now to say against the indiscretion of your private marriage; but for my granddaughter, I feel greatly agitated, and indeed puzzled, how to bring about her introduction in the world."

"She is so charming," exclaimed Lord Euston, "that there wanted but this one circumstance of high birth, to make the whole world concur in their admiration of her."

Lord Seaton felt the poignancy of this remark. He did not however notice it; but, turning to Lord Mortimer, asked where she had acquired her polished manners, and those accomplishments, in which she so eminently excelled.

Lord Mortimer indulged his curiosity with the full recital of her history, connected as it was with that of his brother.

The

The philanthropy of Mr. Euston—the picture of his retirement—his solicitude, and fondness for the object of his care—were all expatiated upon, with a degree of enthusiasm, that seemed to affect even the cold bosom of Lord Seaton; who, when it was finished, remarked, that he was glad they were under no obligation to strangers, or people of obscure condition. His brother had many faults; but he would not deny him his virtues, upon this occasion. However, the chief point now to be considered, was the dignity of the young lady; and he would heartily concur in the support of that.

Lord Mortimer, finding his sentiments so compliant and favourable, urged him to accompany them back to Portland-Place; to which his lordship readily assented.

C H A P. XLI.

THE prejudices of Lord Seaton were thus conquered by his pride ; and, when he arrived at Lord Mortimer's house, he not only embraced his grand-daughter with great affection ; but strove, by every expression of kindness, to recompense her for the degradation, which he thought she had undergone.

The evening was spent extremely pleasantly, though not without some concessions to the vanity of the Earl ; who determined, that the entrance of Lady Augusta, into what he termed

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ed the world, should be as splendid as possible ; and insisted upon her presentation at court taking place, the following Saturday.

The various transactions of the day impressed the minds of all those who were concerned in them, with the highest reverence and gratitude, for the goodness of Providence ; and none more so than Lord Euston ; who, in Augusta's steady refusal of him, now found his greatest happiness ; since their degree of consanguinity must have rendered them miserable in their union, if it had taken place.

Lady Augusta, in addition to her other comforts, had the satisfaction of receiving a letter by Davis, from Lady Merton. It informed her of the marriage of Lord Merton with his cousin ; and contained the most flattering expressions of kindness towards herself. In a very short time, Lady Merton said, she hoped they should all be in England ; and then she should claim the happiness of

being favoured with the company of her beloved friend.

Such a combination of fortunate events concurred, to render her felicity compleat, that she vain would have persuaded herself it was so : But a sigh, which escaped from her bosom, convinced her of the imperfection of human pleasures. She had now sustained the two greatest trials of life ; and, as she had not shrunk under adversity, neither was she elated with prosperity.

As Lord Seaton had particularly insisted, that she should go no more into public, before her presentation, Lady Augusta remained quiet at home for some days.

The relations, and particular friends, of Lord and Lady Mortimer, who, by the care of Lord Seaton, were apprised of their having recovered a long lost daughter, indeed crowded to pay their compliments ; and, amongst the rest, the Prince and Princess of Cassino ;
whose

whose notice had, perhaps, first procured her that of the Earl; and they were, therefore, not the least welcome.

The name which she was to assume, became next the object of Lord Seaton's solicitude. She had been called Matilda, by her parents; he therefore contended, that she should preserve this name; they however yielded to her own wishes; and, out of gratitude to her beloved benefactor, she chose that of Augusta. To please him, the names were united; and she was presented, as Lady Augusta Matilda Amesley.

The first time she was permitted to go abroad, she flew to the house of Mrs. Mills. The good woman hardly knew how to address her, till she convinced her, by her affectionate caresses, that a change of fortune had produced no alteration in her manners.

“My mother,” said she, “loves you, almost as much as I do. She will soon see you;
G 4 and,

and, if she can, will repay the thousand obligations I owe you."

Lord Mortimer's doors were now open for the reception of visitors; and all the fashionable world appeared to pay their compliments. The happy parents were delighted at the homage paid to their child; but she herself had too recently experienced, how much of that admiration she owed to circumstances, to be either intoxicated by it, or set an additional value on herself.

Among the visitors, who came to pay their compliments of congratulation, to her infinite surprise, she beheld Mrs. Sydenham and Miss Felton. The former, indeed, had done nothing to offend her; but the shy behaviour of the latter, she thought, would have exempted her from a visit of ceremony like this. Unconscious, (at least in appearance) of having committed any rudeness, Miss Felton exclaimed, when she approached her, "My dear creature, I am happy, to a degree, at your good fortune;

fortune ; for you have always been a great favourite of mine. Sir William will soon be here, to pay his respects to you ; and I hope we shall be extremely intimate."

Lady Augusta could not play the hypocrite so far, as to receive this address, with the apparent ardour, with which it was delivered ; and Miss Felton, sufficiently checked by the reserve of her manners, soon departed.

Lord Euston, who was an observer of this scene, soon after approached, and said, " Your flippant acquaintance, my sweet niece, has soon left you."

" Insincerity like hers," replied Lady Augusta, " ought at least to be punished, with the neglect I have shewn her. It is for such friends as you (added she, smiling) whose kind attentions pursued me, even in poverty, that I reserve all my love."

G 5

" Ah,"

“ Ah,” said he, “ I have long suspected, that there is indeed some favoured object, for whom that reserve has been made.”

“ You guess right,” answered she, in the same lively strain. “ My heart must have been predisposed in favour of another, when it refused to listen to you.”

“ And, am I not intitled to your confidence then ?” replied Lord Euston. “ Oh, my dear Lady Augusta ! a regard such as I have felt for you, must be converted into the most perfect friendship ; and, independent of the ties of blood, which now unite us, there is not any thing which I would not do, to promote your happiness.”

“ You have the best, and the most amiable heart in the world,” answered she ; “ but do you suppose, that, surrounded as I am with a thousand felicities, of which I could have no expectation, I am not a happy creature ?”

"The time has been," said Lord Euston, "when there was distraction in the thought. Now, however, though I am not less convinced, I am at least more ready to promote your wishes. My fortune, my influence, and even my life, are devoted to you, whenever you shall honour me so far, as to lay your commands upon my friendship."

"You are serious, my Lord," answered she; "and the fervour, with which your offers are made, alarms me with the apprehension, that you really suspect me of being attached to some unworthy object."

"Oh, far from it," said Lord Euston. "Whoever you distinguish must have merit; but if he should have other wants, which I can supply, you will make me happy, by pointing out how I may do it."

"My generous and exalted friend!" cried Augusta, "every moment of my life con-

vinces me more and more, of the goodness of your heart, and of the just claim you have upon the confidence of mine. You are not deceived; and I literally spoke truth, when I jestingly told you, that a predilection in favour of another had made me insensible to your merits. I have, however, no cause to blush for the object of it; neither can he be benefited by your noble intentions. Believe me, if there were any difficulties, within your power to remove, I would be more explicit; but, as matters are, your pity is all I could receive."

"I neither ask, nor would hear more," replied Lord Euston; "for I have no curiosity to be gratified, if I cannot be of service to you. Promise me, if circumstances should so change, that I may still be of use to you, that you will let me know it; and I will remain at present silent on the subject."

"I do

"I do promise you," cried she, giving him her hand, in token of it; and, more company just then arriving, the conversation ended.

CHAP. XLII.

THE following morning, Lord Seaton sent to ask, when he might find Lord and Lady Mortimer at home, and alone. As the message seemed to imply, that he had something of consequence to impart, an answer was returned, that they should wait at home, the whole morning, in hopes of having the honour of seeing him. He arrived soon after; and, as Augusta was in the room when he entered, she arose with an intention to withdraw. He, however, prevented her, by saying,

saying, he wished her to be present at the conference.

“ I wish,” said his Lordship, “ to learn from you, Lady Augusta, where, and in what manner, the remains of my brother are interred ?”

The solemn manner, in which he had begun to interrogate her, had agitated her so much, that she did not readily reply ; which Lord Seaton attributed to fear ; and he therefore added, “ Be not discomposed, I mean yet to give him those funeral honours, to which he is intitled.”

“ His dear remains,” replied Lady Augusta, “ were deposited, by his own direction, in the little church, of which he had been pastor : And, although no escutcheon graced the procession, a more noble and higher tribute awaited him, in the tears and blessings of all those, to whom he had been friend, guide, and comforter. A plain marble slab, suited to
the

the simplicity of his life, and which alone tells his name and family, points out the place where he is laid : His virtues will always be talked of, and ever kept in remembrance."

Lady Mortimer melted into tears, at the affectionate energy, with which Lady Augusta had spoken : And Lord Seaton said, though with some little hesitation, " In thus resolving to remove the body of my brother to the family vault at Seaton Castle, I mean to pay respect to his memory, as well as to evince to the world, that I am sorry for the disagreement which happened between us. If, therefore, you think, that his resentments against me were not so strong—so very strong—as to reject, whilst living, any overtures of kindness to him; I will venture to pay him the only atonement, which remains for me, now that he is dead."

" His whole life," replied Lady Augusta, " was employed in the practise of the duties of Christianity ; and I am sure, he would not
have

have been wanting in one of its first precepts, the forgiveness of injuries, had it ever been solicited. As the removal of his remains, to the burying-place of his ancestors, will certainly be a mark of distinguishing respect, I must own the contemplation of it affords me a melancholy pleasure."

"It shall be done directly," said Lord Seaton. "I will advise with people who understand these matters, that every thing may be conducted with the greatest propriety: And I hope, Lord Mortimer, that you will attend me, and my son, to Seaton Castle; for I mean to be present upon the occasion."

Lord Mortimer professed his extreme readiness to do so; and they then talked over the plan, which was to be pursued. After Lord Seaton's departure, Lady Mortimer spoke of her father's compunction of conscience, with much satisfaction; and Lady Augusta, whose thoughts were now turned upon her first friends, and former situation, took

took this opportunity of recommending David and Mary to her father, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Williams; to whose kindnesses she had been so much indebted. He commissioned her to offer one of his best farms in England to the former, if they should wish to change their situation; and he empowered her to make an ample return to the latter, for the compassionate attention they had shewn her. He added, that Lord Seaton had intimated to him, that he meant to bestow a donation, (which he supposed would be a liberal one,) among the parishioners; "And," said he, "I mean that my Augusta shall contribute to the comforts of the friends of her infancy."

"Oh, my dear father," cried she, "how considerate is your goodness! But I will own that I yet intend to trespass farther upon your indulgence. I wish once more to visit those dear abodes of peace and cheerfulness; and to retrace them with my beloved parents."

"You

"You have anticipated my design, my sweet girl," replied Lady Mortimer: "I intend it shall be our first excursion, next summer. But, in the mean time, there is another friend of yours within our reach, whom we will no longer neglect: The carriage is at the door; and we will drive to Bond-street immediately."

The rank of Lady Augusta appeared a visible restraint upon the behaviour of Mrs. Mills; and the acknowledgements of Lady Mortimer greatly distressed her. They both used every expression of kindness to re-assure her.

"My daughter tells me," said Lady Mortimer, "that you are about retiring from business, with a competency. If you have not yet fixed upon the place of your abode, let me entreat, that you will accept of one in my neighbourhood. It is a sweet little spot, and just at the extremity of the shrubbery, at Denmore-Park, where we can see you every day;

day; by which means I can alone discharge the obligations I owe you."

Augusta added her solicitations; and Mrs. Mills, proud of this distinction, left every thing to the arrangement of Lady Mortimer, and promised to enter upon her new habitation, before the expiration of the summer.

The penitent Davis was next thought of by Lady Mortimer; and she offered to her the choice of a pension, sufficient to enable her to live in comfort, or a continued attendance upon Lady Augusta.

She joyfully preferred the latter; determined, as she said, by the fidelity of her future services, to rescue herself from the disgrace, into which her former conduct had involved her.

CHAP.

CHAP. XLIII.

LORD SEATON, Lord Mortimer, and Lord Euston, soon after left town, to be present at the re-interment of Mr. Euston, in the chapel at Seaton Castle; and the ladies, upon so solemn an occasion, resolved to dedicate their time to strict retirement. They also wore mourning for the week; and, during this interval, Lady Augusta recounted to her fond mother a more particular history, than she had yet given, of the transactions of her former life.

The

The return of the gentlemen plunged them again into scenes of fashionable life ; where the beauty and accomplishments of Lady Augusta rendered her the object of universal admiration.

One evening, Lady Mortimer and Lady Augusta attended a grand rout, given by the Princess of Cassino ; and, as the former engaged at cards, the latter joined Lady Mellborough and her two daughters, who were indeed distant relations ; and they amused themselves in conversing with different parties of their acquaintance. Late in the evening, Lady Augusta saw Lord Euston enter the room, accompanied by a gentleman in deep mourning.

“ Do you know who the stranger is with Lord Euston ? ” said she to Miss Mellborough.

“ It is Lord Sunderne,” answered she, “ and I did not know that he was returned to England, until this moment.”

“ It

"It is evident then," thought Lady Augusta, "that the old Lord is dead;" and she sighed from the recollection of the solicitude, Mr. Devereux was used to express at his illness.

The two gentlemen had, by this time, nearly, approached them; and she was astonished at the great resemblance, which Lord Sunderne bore to his brother; so great, that, but for his having a sickly countenance, and being much thinner, she would have thought it was Mr. Devereux himself. He stopped first, to speak to Lady Mellborough; who detained him some moments, by inquiries after his health: and then, turning to Lady Augusta, bowed most respectfully, while Lord Euston said, Lord Sunderne. Her heart throbbed violently; and, conscious of the confusion she was in, which she wished to conceal from her own party, she turned hastily to a Lady who was passing, and began a conversation with her. Lord Sunderne still remained near her; but she studiously avoided looking at him again, fearing that her emotion had been observed.

The

The Miss Mellboroughs asked him several questions; and she observed, without appearing to attend, that his answers were chiefly made by monosyllables; and that he was melancholy, and absent. The Princess of Cassino just then entering the room, good manners required, that he should pay his compliments to her; and then Miss Charlotte Mellborough said, "What an elegant man Lord Sunderne is! it is a great pity he should be so stupid."

Lady Augusta, finding herself far from well, complained that the heat of the room overcame her; and Lord Euston, fancying a greater change in her countenance, than there really was, conducted her into an outer room; and then went in search of Lady Mortimer, whose party being broke up, their chairs were called, and they departed immediately.

Lady Augusta took herself severely to task, for the emotion she had betrayed, at the sight of Mr. Devereux's brother. "His solitudes for me," said she, "have ceased to exist;

and I ought to banish a person from my remembrance, to whom I am become so indifferent. He has long since been released from his attendance upon his poor sick father; and yet I, the pretended object of his warmest affection, have not once been thought of. Surely my disinterested conduct merited, at least, the shew of respect: but I will punish his neglect—I will teach myself to think and speak of him with indifference; and I will begin, by talking of him to his brother.

These were the resolutions she formed; and it was not long before she had an opportunity of putting them in practice. Lady Mellborough gave a ball the following evening: and thither she was engaged to attend Lady Mortimer. She had heard Lord Sunderne promise to be of the party; and she waited his entrance into the room, with some degree of anxiety. She saw him at length appear; and as he approached her, she courtesied to him; but to her great surprise, although alone, he passed on. His melancholy appearance in-

terested her, and she sat down to observe him. Lord Euston had taken his seat by her unperceived; until he at length said, "Dó you not think that Sunderne is amazingly altered?"

She started at his question; but replied, "It is not possible that I can be a judge, as I have never seen him before last night."

"Is it possible then," cried Lord Euston, "that you can have forgot Devereux?"

"Devereux," repeated Lady Augusta, faintly: "How can Mr. Devereux and Lord Sunderne be the same?"

"By a combination of unfortunate or lucky events," replied he, "call them which you please. He lost his father, some little time ago; and since then his elder brother has died of a fever."

The

The boasted resolutions of Lady Augusta forsook her in a moment; and her embarrassment became apparent to Lord Euston.

“ Good God !” said he, “ what can have occasioned this agitation ?”

“ I am shocked,” replied she, trying to regain her composure, “ at the reception I gave him last night. I really took him for the brother of Mr. Devereux; and treated him as a stranger.”

“ If that be all,” said Lord Euston, “ I will instantly reconcile my sweet cousin to herself; for I will go and acquaint Lord Sunderne—”

“ Oh, no, no !” cried Lady Augusta, detaining him, “ perhaps he would not like—perhaps he does not care—”

She left the sentence unfinished; and Lord Euston viewed her with so much surprise,

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that

that she shrunk abashed from his inquiring eye.

“ I am convinced,” he at last exclaimed; “ Your secret, my lovely friend, is at length explained to me : I will fetch Sunderne hither ; but let not your delicacy take the alarm ; for that man alone shall receive such a blessing, who knows how to value it as he ought.”

He departed so suddenly, that Lady Augusta had not time to prevent it. She redoubled her efforts to regain some degree of composure ; which she had but in part effected, when Lord Euston returned with Lord Sunderne.

“ Here,” said he, “ I bring two masqueraded friends together. In Lord Sunderne, madam, you behold Mr. Devereux ; and in Lady Augusta Amesley, you, Sir, will recognise Miss Denbeigh.”

The

The countenance of Lord Sunderne was now animated with the most lively expression of pleasure.

"If," said he, "Lady Augusta will condescend to confirm to me this supposed mistake, she will relieve my mind from the most painful inquietude, it has ever yet endured."

"That I have been in an error respecting you, is most true," replied she. "But are you more easily to be forgiven? or have I so many resemblances, that you could not discover me?"

"I know but one image of you," answered Lord Sunderne, "and that is in my own memory."

Lord Euston had by this time left them: Lord Sunderne therefore took his seat by Lady Augusta; and after a pause, he added,

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"I had forgot there was another; but that I wear equally near my heart."

He then produced the miniature he had stolen from Augusta's port folio; which was set in gold, and hung suspended from his neck by a ribbon.

"If it be my own picture," cried Lady Augusta, "I am totally at a loss to guess, by what means you came by it. Pray tell me."

"I stole it," replied he, "from your port folio, in Lady Merton's house; and it has ever since been the companion of all my unhappy moments. Oh, Lady Augusta! to what an extremity of wretchedness have you reduced me, by so carefully secreting your residence, for the last two months! What had I done to forfeit your confidence?"

"Indeed," replied she, "I never intended to secrete my retirement from you. Mrs. Bru-

Brudenell knew full well, that I returned to Mrs. Mills's; and, though my departure from her house, was sudden, in consequence of your kind intimations, I could not have been so ungrateful, as to suffer you to remain ignorant of my safety, if I had not known, that the information was within your own power, whenever you chose to solicit it."

"Good God!" exclaimed Lord Sunderne, "what a victim I have been to an incensed female. Mrs. Brudenell was deaf to all my entreaties; and my other inquiries were equally ineffectual."

"Well," said Lady Augusta, with a smile, "since we have been equally punished, I believe we must mutually forgive her."

"You still," answered Lord Sunderne, with a sigh, "possess the same goodness, and captivating condescension. In allowing me to hope, that you were surprised at a neglect

so extraordinary, you afford me a solace for the misery you inflicted upon me, by your cold reception of me last night."

"That," said Lady Augusta, "I hope has been explained to you by Lord Euston. Totally occupied, as I have been, by a discovery of my own family, you will not wonder, that the two recent events in yours have escaped my knowledge. Your altered appearance confirmed my mistake; and I received you as the brother of Mr. Devereux, to whom I was altogether a stranger. Do not believe, that the change in my situation has produced any alteration in my sentiments. Ah! how unworthy I should be of it, if I could forget the valuable proofs of friendship, which you shewed to the poor Augusta Denbeigh."

"The solitudes I have experienced, since I saw you, have been many and great," replied Lord Sunderne. "Domestic distresses have deeply affected my spirits; and the impenetrable

penetrable mystery thrown over your retreat, completed my unhappiness. The first evening of my arrival in London, I accidentally met Lord Euston; and he acquainted me with your re-union with your own family. Shall I own to you, that this intelligence gave me the keenest regret? Deserted, as I had been, by Miss Denbeigh,—on whom my very existence depended,—what could I expect from Lady Augusta Amesley? I however accompanied Lord Euston to the Princess of Cassino's; where I read in your embarrassment, and averted looks, a disapprobation, that condemned me to perpetual wretchedness. I conjectured, you would be here this evening; and I came hither, to take a last farewell of the object, that my soul holds most dear."

At this moment, Lady Mortimer approached them; and they were immediately joined by Lord Euston. They walked about the rooms, for some little time; during which Lord Sunderne lost all his melancholy, and

appeared the happiest of human beings: And, when at length the two ladies withdrew, the gentlemen obtained permission, to breakfast with them the next morning.

CHAP. XLIV.

LORD SUNDERNE retired from Lady Mellborough's, with emotions far different from what he had before experienced. Firmly persuaded, that Miss Denbeigh could feel no sentiments of compassion for him, since she had doomed him to a perpetual banishment; (for such he termed her concealment of herself) he had given himself up to a melancholy dejection of spirits, which, by degrees, had considerably affected his health. Whilst he believed her attached to another,

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he had resolutely combated his passion; but after finding her disengaged, to have his hopes again extinguished, was a trial too hard to be borne. Indeed various circumstances, and of a melancholy nature, had crowded upon him, just at that time; for he had scarcely closed the eyes of his father, before an express arrived, to tell him, that his brother lay dangerously ill of a fever at Boulogne. Distracted by so many conflicts of mind, he hardly knew what step to pursue: however piety prevailed. He saw the remains of his father consigned to their kindred earth; and then flew, with the utmost expedition, to the brother whom he tenderly loved. Here, however, his attentions were unavailing: For a fortnight before his arrival, remorseless death had seized upon his victim. He mourned, with fraternal affection, over his remains; and attended them to their last earthly mansion. Life seemed then to possess no longer any charms for him. The ties of domestic life were broken; and the hopes of a never to be exhausted passion were extinguished.

tinguished. The accession of wealth—the enjoyment of titles,—occasioned him only regrets; and his days passed on in gloomy despondency. Dissatisfied with every place, because he was so with himself, he directed his steps to the metropolis; and Lord Euston, having received intelligence of his arrival from his valet, lost no time in making him a visit. He found him so much out of health and spirits, that his compassionate heart felt the liveliest concern: and, supposing that this change proceeded from the melancholy scenes, in which he had lately been involved, he judged, that the gaieties of the town offered the most powerful antidote to his dejected spirits; and, with this view, persuaded him to accompany him to the Princess of Cassino's rout. On their way thither, he acquainted him with the circumstance of Augusta's having been re-united to her family. The surprise and consternation of Lord Sunderne was inconceivable. His emotion, however, could not be discerned by Lord Euston; who also attributed his silence,—which arose from excess
of

of agitation,—to the absorption of his own feelings, which took away from him the power of rejoicing at the felicity of others. He had said, that he expected to find Lady Mortimer, and her daughter, at the Princess of Cassino's. Divided between the pleasure of seeing *her* he had so long lost, and the apprehensions he suffered, lest *she* should view *him* with indifference; he entered the room, with such a degree of perturbation, as almost overcame him, and added to the apparent want of health, under which he laboured. When he approached Lady Augusta, all his fears were confirmed. He observed, that she scarcely looked at him; and that, as if to avoid any conversation with him, she instantly turned from him, and addressed herself to a Lady who was passing. In her endeavours to conceal the embarrassment she was under, he read cold reserve, and confirmed dislike.

It is not difficult to conceive the sensation, with which he quitted the room. Misery appeared his only portion; for even hope, the

the wretch's last comfort, had forsaken him. He was not long in fixing upon his plan. England, the dear spot on which he had once fondly flattered himself, he should enjoy uninterrupted felicity, was to be for ever abandoned; and one parting look, at the cause of his wretchedness, was all that he allowed himself. He had received from Lady Mellborough an invitation, to be at her ball the following evening. There, as her relation, he should certainly meet Lady Augusta; and there he was determined to bid her adieu for ever.

This last, and so much dreaded interview, restored him, however, to all the delights of renewed hope, and anticipated happiness; and the joyful tumult of his spirits kept him as much from rest now, as grief had done heretofore. He rose at an early hour, and waited the arrival of Lord Euston; who was to call upon him, with the utmost impatience, though he knew it was yet too early to appear in Portland-Place. From the amazing
change

change, Lord Euston perceived in the countenance of his friend, his suspicions were immediately confirmed; and, after the first salutations were over, he said, "Sunderne, you have been less candid with me than I deserved; I made you the confidant of my infant passion—but you concealed yours from me."

"And I should for ever have concealed it," replied Lord Sunderne, "not only from you, but from all the world; if I had continued to believe, what I then thought, that you were the accepted admirer of the most adorable of her sex. Oh Euston! was it a time, when you disclosed to me your own pure and disinterested passion, to oppose mine to it, and torment your generous bosom with the pangs of jealousy, or unavailing pity? I then doated upon your lovely niece, with a degree of distraction nothing short of your own; but I resolved to renounce her—to give her up to you, whose better expectations, and prior professions, had the justest claim to such a prize;

prize ;—and, in short, to combat my passion, though it deprived me of my existence.”

“ Good God !” exclaimed Lord Euston, “ how noble has been your conduct ! Indeed, my dear friend, I fear I never could have emulated what I so much admire, had not the ties of consanguinity effectually debarred me from a nearer union with the amiable object of our mutual admiration. But a rich reward (added he with a sigh) will be the recompence of your virtue ; and in the promotion of your happiness, I can alone repay you, for the exalted proofs of friendship, which you have bestowed upon me.”

Lord Sunderne expressed his acknowledgements, in the warmest terms ; and they then proceeded together to Lord Mortimer’s.

The strict intimacy, which had subsisted between Lord Euston and Lord Sunderne, from their early youth, had led Lady Mortimer to consider him, almost in the light of a second brother.

ther. His reception was, therefore, as cordial as possible.

Soon after breakfast was finished, Lady Mortimer retired, to write letters; and Lord Euston, pretending business with Lord Mortimer, took him out of the room, and left Lord Sunderne alone with Lady Augusta.

She first broke the silence, which ensued for a moment,—and said, “ I greatly fear, you have thought me guilty of much ingratitude; since I perceive, that Mrs. Brudenell, from motives which I cannot guess at, concealed from you, that I had returned to a safe asylum. I shudder to think of the dangerous society, your friendship rescued me from; and, whenever she has an opportunity, my mother will add her acknowledgements to mine.”

“ The misery I have endured, in consequence of my ignorance of your situation, has been unutterably great,” replied Lord Sunderne. “ The story, which Mrs. Brudenell told

told me, of your abrupt departure, I gave no credit to. Indeed I was bewildered with the many conjectures, which presented themselves to me ; and, when I had tried every method to discover your retreat, and found it impossible to do so, the suspicions I had before entertained, that you had intentionally secreted yourself from me, were converted into a dreadful certainty."

Lady Augusta was going to say something in reply; but Lord Sunderne proceeded thus:

" In the last interview, I had the happiness of enjoying with Miss Denbeigh, her candour and condescension relieved me from an error, which had been fatal to my peace—and, in a moment, raised me, from the depth of human wretchedness, to the most exquisite felicity. Presuming on the unexpected discovery, that your heart was disengaged, I ventured to disclose to you the history of mine. You had the goodness then to pardon my temerity ;
but

but dare I now hope, that I shall not offend, by declaring, that not only my future happiness, but my very existence depends upon you?"

Agitated and abashed, Lady Augusta tried to say something; but her words died away upon her lips;—and Lord Sunderne again pleaded his long and ardent passion, with all the energy, which unaffected admiration inspires. Superior to the common artifices of her sex, Lady Augusta, in recovering from her embarrassment, regained her usual dignity of sentiment and ingenuousness; and Lord Sunderne was rewarded for all his past sufferings, by hearing from her the sweet confession, that her own partiality had been of an equal date with his.

Lord Euston, whose excellent heart now knew no pleasure, but from the promotion of the happiness of the two friends, whom he most dearly loved, acquainted Lord and Lady Mortimer with the long attachment which had
sub-

subsisted between them; and they were delighted to bestow their daughter upon the man, whose distinguishing taste had appreciated her merit so justly, at a time when poverty and distress had thrown a veil over its radiance.

Lord Seaton too, although he had raised his hopes to a Ducal Coronet, gave a willing assent to their nuptials.

Their union was productive of a degree of felicity, as refined as it is rare. The precepts of benevolence, of social virtue, and of human kindness, which Mr. Euston had practised, were remembred, and emulated by them; and they were, therefore, a source of happiness, to others as well as themselves.

Among the many friends, whom their rank and affluence, as well as their virtues, created them, Lady Sunderne never failed to distinguish those most, to whom she had been indebted in the days of adversity:

Lady Merton, and the humble, though meritorious Mrs. Mills, were therefore her greatest favourites.

Lord and Lady Mortimer, whilst they witnessed the felicity of their darling child, bowed with reverential gratitude to Providence, who had thus preserved the innocent victim of their CLANDESTINE, because INDISCREET marriage.

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